A WALL OF MEN

by

MARGARET HILL McCARTER

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A WALL OF MEN

We go to rear a wall of men
On Freedom's Southern line,
And plant beside the cotton-tree
The rugged Northern pine.

—John Greenleaf Whittier.

The world, their world, because they were young and made worlds easily, had no flaws in the making

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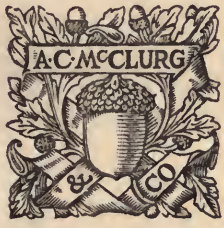
BY

MARGARET HILL McCARTER

AUTHOR OF THE PRICE OF THE PRAIRIE
THE PEACE OF THE SOLOMON VALLEY
ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOR
By J. N. MARCHAND

SECOND EDITION



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To the memory of those brave Empire Builders, who, half a hundred years ago, founded a kingdom on Liberty, Loyalty, and Love, and defended it with the strength of brain and brawn and heart, this story of a day of peril and power is offered here.

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For the accuracy of the data which supplies the historical background to this romance grateful recognition is here given to William Elsey Connelley, historian, essayist, editor, whose generous assistance has been invaluable to the author.

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A WALL OF MEN

PART ONE

THE DREAM

A hush comes over the story; a swaying back and forth,
Before the clinch for the combat between the South and
the North;
But in the lull and luridness of a daylight nearly done
John Brown has strapped his knapsack and taken his
Kansas gun.

—Samuel W. Duffield.

A WALL OF MEN

CHAPTER I

BESIDE THE OLD TRAIL

The rudiments of empire here
Are plastic yet and warm;
The chaos of a mighty world
Is rounding into form!
—John Greenleaf Whittier.

THE late summer rains had not been scant, and the Vinland Valley was brilliantly green that October. The Wakarusa winding down to meet the Kaw was bordered either side by grassy stretches of virgin prairie over which the warm autumn breezes swept steadily, gently, ceaselessly. Great waves of verdure, dark in the dip, yellow green on the crest, kept time to the rhythm of the wind. Away to the northward the bluffs on the farther side of the Kaw River were only a gray shadow upon the sky-line. Nearer, in the northwest, with golden crest uplifted above green draperies round about it, rose strong and clear that sentinel headland of the Kaw Valley christened Mount Oread. To the south, a wooded height marks the bold beginning of the swell that separates two Kansas river systems. Down its steep sides the old Santa Fé Trail zigzagged through picturesque ways, shut in here and there by sharp-cut stone ledges, and overhung by vine-draped trees. A cool, hid-

den bit of wildwood roadway it was in the summer-time; a snug, sheltered length of trail when the biting winds gnawed at the open prairies and the frenzied winter's snows surged up the shallow draws, or piled their huge heaps in aimless pattern on a helpless land.

From the foot of this bluff the path of the Trail sloped evenly away to a deep ravine, cutting an irregular line across the plains from the southwest. Beyond the ravine it crossed a rough, billowy belt of ground and came again to a gently undulating prairie.

To the eastward, on the crest of this swell, the Trail ran through a stretch of woodland, weaving to left or right where the young saplings bunched together or a dark thicket of evergreens stood up against easy road making.

Along this historic old highway in the middle '50's came the westward-facing people, with purposes as varied as the varied speech and manner of the men who held them: the frontier border raider; the New England emigrant, Pilgrim Father of the plains; the Southern gentleman, loyal to the empire-extending spirit; the refugee Negro, sometimes close upon his heels; the half-civilized Indian from Michigan; the staunch-headed Quaker from Indiana; the adventurer, the State-builder, the outlaw, the missionary, the dreamer of a day of better things — the footprint of each was, from time to time, in the dust of this Trail. Each had crossed the border line between the old Missouri State and the young Kansas Territory, and, moving westward over the rolling green and billows, had come to this wooded crest. Along its thicket-guarded aisle they had followed the Trail in its winding course to the height above the Vinland Valley. Down by picturesque ledges they had threaded their way to the

open again, and wandered off to the wide lands stretching away with faint shadings westward somewhere.

What this Wakarusa region held for those who traveled the Trail in that fateful decade, their controlling purpose in coming to it helped mightily to determine. Just now there were no black shadows of tragedy on the heliotrope heavens, no moan of sorrow in the gently pulsing breeze, no quiver of pain in the rippling grasses. A land of peace and promise, it lay under sweet October skies, awaiting the hand of Empire to shape its story.

The sun of an autumn day was moving toward the late afternoon, filling the west with a mellow radiance and touching to burnished glass the quiet pools of the Wakarusa. Just at the edge of the wood overlooking the Vinland Valley a boy and a girl sat on a log beside the Trail gazing out toward the north. Beyond them, where the shadows were deeper, another boy sprawled on the pine needles beside a clump of evergreens. There was a summer languor in the air, and the three young people resting idly on the shaded height seemed an unconscious part of the landscape's stillness and dreamy beauty.

"Look yonder, Beth. I wonder if that could be David Lamond and Boniface Penwin, and thy father, Elliot?"

It was the boy on the log who spoke. Something of gentle proprietorship was in his eyes as he turned to the girl. He had the accent and slight drawl of the Southern tongue, and there was the merest shade of ridicule in the tone of the words "thy father." Elliot, the young fellow on the ground, gave no sign of having felt the thrust.

"Yes," he said, "that must be the rude forefathers of Kansas coming down toward the crossing. See, Beth, the two riding abreast, one on a white horse and the

other on a black one. Look, they 'll soon be out of sight in that bumpy prairie beyond the ravine by the 'Hole in the Rock.' The third rider, away behind on a red roan, is coming like a wild Indian to overtake the other two. The black horse must be David Lamond's; the white palfrey looks like my own dear dad's; the red roan, Craig, ought to be Colonel Penwin's. He must have gotten separated from the others somehow. They don't seem to know he is behind them."

"You 've got mighty good eyes for a Quaker, Elliot," Craig replied. "I don't see anything like red or black or white, and my father rode the bay colt anyhow. But I know they are horsemen coming yonder, and since it is about time for the parents of these babes in the woods to be getting home from Lawrence, I just guessed that was who these three might be. They may be the 'Three Wise Men of Gotham,' or 'Old King Cole's Fiddlers Three,' or any other noted trio, as well as the fathers of us three here. We can't be sure till they get this side of the ravine."

"I hope father will get home to-night," Beth said, shading her eyes and studying the view. "Mother is so uneasy when he is away. By the way," turning toward the trees behind them, "the woods are so still, I wonder where Lucy and the boys are. I haven't heard a sound for half an hour."

"Busy getting nuts, or up to some mischief, I suppose. They are not likely to get lost with that big brother of mine looking after them. Are you afraid, too, when your father is away?"

A deepening tone came suddenly into Elliot's voice as he asked the question, and his eyes looked steadily into hers.

"Not very often," Beth answered, frankly. "Mother

says I am like father, I never get scared at the right time."

They were standing now looking out across the landscape to where, far down the broad, dust-white trail, two horsemen were riding slowly through the late afternoon haze. Far behind them a third horseman was covering the ground more rapidly, as if eager to overtake them.

Youth has ever a charm of its own, but to these three young people, just verging into manhood and womanhood, Nature had been kind indeed. The older of the two boys, Craig Penwin, he of the Southern tongue, although dressed in the plain clothes of the Westerner in frontier days, had a certain grace of manner that declared the fine blood of the South. He was tall and slender, with quick, easy motion, more suggestive of skill than of strength and endurance when the fulness of manhood should come. His eyes were blue, deep, summer-sky blue, save when a steely glitter gave warning that their owner might be just, but never merciful, never forgiving. He did not smile quite often enough, and a little film of reserve warded off familiarity.

The other boy, Elliot Darrow, younger, less assertive, maybe, had nevertheless a wholesome sturdiness of physique and a pleasing frankness of manner. His eyes were very dark, with an Indian's keenness of vision that could distinguish between black and roan when his companion saw only one color. His chin was square-cut, his mouth was firm, his cast of features, although boyish now, gave promise of a manly beauty that even old age cannot obliterate. Above everything else was his smile engaging. Then his face lost the little hint of sternness it held. Nobody ever doubted Elliot Darrow who saw him smile.

Between the two was the girl, Beth Lamond, with whom the Quaker and the young Southerner had known the good fellowship of companions. With all three, life was yet to be met, and to them endless adventures and new conditions called daily. No voice came out of the still beauty of this October afternoon to whisper to each that good fellowship cannot stay, nor to tell why some quicker pulse beat brought a new thrill to mark the day long afterward in memory.

Through the wind-swayed boughs the sunlight sifted down on the girl's fair hair, touching with gold all its soft, careless waves. The face beneath this golden glory, with its curves of youth and bloom of health, was one to make even a passing stranger turn to study. It held something more than a fine cast of features: dimples to fit the ready smile, and eyes that sparkled with fun.

"Beth Lamond is pretty enough for any kind of a pet name, as a sweet Scotch lassie now," Colonel Boniface Penwin, who had an eye for pretty faces, had declared, "but she will be the handsomest woman west of the Missouri River by and by; and then, by George, they'll call her only Elizabeth Lamond, the beauty of Kansas."

"If they don't call her Elizabeth Penwin," Craig's little brother Tarleton had put in, a remark at which his father laughed uproariously.

But Craig, kicking viciously at his brother's shins, had said in disgust, "You're the biggest idiot for your age, Tarley, that ever came out of Georgia."

"Yep, Craig, I was lucky to get away when I did. Lots of idiots still down South," Tarleton had snapped back with a mischievous grin.

Colonel Boniface Penwin was no mean judge of David Lamond's daughter. Her dark-gray eyes, toning neither to blue nor brown, with long, black lashes and well-

marked, black brows, gave its striking feature to her fair face, beneath the abundant sunshiny hair. And in these eyes, and about the firm, red lips, keener judges than Colonel Penwin might have read the promise of womanly charm and sturdy Scotch strength of character.

Her dress on this day was of dark blue and silvery gray plaid, with a white thread checking through the pattern — the colors her father loved to have her wear. They were the very plaid of the old Clan Lamond, sacred reminders to the sturdy Kansas pioneer of family traditions and a boyhood back in old Scotland.

The eyes of the three were on the figures passing down the Trail toward the wooded ravine where the creek cuts a deep channel through the stony stratum. Below the Trail crossing in this ravine was a dark pool, hollowed in the softer under layers of rock by the friction of the passing stream through cycles of slow-wearing years. On account of its peculiar formation and inky waters and uncertain depth, it had become a landmark on the Santa Fé Trail known as the "Hole in the Rock."

The two horsemen were lost to view now in what Elliot called the "bumpy prairie," beyond the ravine. Just as the third rider passed out of sight in the broken land, he suddenly spurred off to the south — leaving the Trail and concealing his way in the rough, billowy places until he dropped into the shadows of the wooded hollow. The young people waited long, watching the Trail, unconscious of the passing minutes, until a shout in the woods behind them announced the approach of a quartette of youngsters. Joe Darrow and Tarley Penwin, barefoot boys of ten years, swinging a long piece of wild grapevine between them, came racing down the Trail together. Close behind them was Lucy Penwin, a winsome, round-cheeked girl of thirteen. Last of all came Mark Darrow,

with an empty bag about his shoulders; a lusty boy of fourteen, with a man's voice and a reckless, happy-go-lucky manner.

"The nuts we didn't get," he declared, rolling up the bag and aiming it at his brother Elliot's head. "I wish now I'd gone fishing. I don't want to have anything more to do with these woods. I heard the queerest noise down the Trail as we were coming up here."

"Well, it is time you young papooses were getting here anyhow," Craig said.

"And there is wood to cut and chores to do when you get home, Mark. You are not through with your day's work yet," Elliot declared.

"Not through!" Mark exclaimed, with a solemn face. "Well I guess not; but I wonder what that noise could have been. I wish now I'd never come to Kansas. My troubles are only beginning."

The laugh that followed was checked midway by a voice beyond them, saying:

"You are right, my boy. You are right, your troubles are only beginning."

A man on horseback had ridden from behind the evergreen clump and was standing in the dusty way. His clothing was coarse and his face unshaven. Such a stranger was no uncommon sight here six decades ago. But the man's sudden appearance, his strong voice and piercing eyes, held the group speechless.

"I didn't mean to scare you," the stranger said. "Do you live about here?"

"Yes, sir," Craig replied.

The man looked at the group, and then said:

"You do not all belong to the same family. How long have your fathers been in the Territory?"

"We all came here last spring," Craig said. "There

are three families of us. Our fathers took up land about these woods. We've been out hunting for nuts and paw-paws, and waiting for our——"

He did not go on. In frontier days children learned early not to talk too much with strangers, and Craig was courteous by training but cautious by instinct.

The man nodded approvingly.

"Can you tell me where I can find David Lamond or Hiram Darrow?" he questioned.

"I think they are down the Trail now, coming from Lawrence," Elliot answered, pointing to the ravine hiding the open way. "There are some men down in the woods by the creek."

"How shall I know them? The ravine may have other men in it and I am a stranger here."

"There are three of them together: Colonel Penwin and the two you ask for. We have been up here watching the Trail for an hour, and nobody else has been in sight down there," Elliot explained.

"Colonel Boniface Penwin of Georgia?" The stranger's lips stiffened as he spoke.

"Yes, sir, my father," Craig replied, quickly, his own lips tightening also about his white teeth.

"I have no business with him—just yet," the man answered in an even tone. "I should not want to mistake him for either one of the others."

"David Lamond is riding a big, black horse, and my father, Hiram Darrow, is on a white one. Colonel Penwin has a bay colt. You can't miss them," Elliot said.

The stranger smiled.

"It used to be said that a white horse means peace, and a black one, power. If you had a red roan now it would mean bloodshed. I shall know the men, I think."

All this time Mark Darrow had not taken his eyes

from the stranger's face. As he lifted his bridle rein to go, Mark asked, with boyish bluntness:

"What made you say our troubles are only beginning? We are just a lot of boys and girls."

The stranger looked out across the landscape, a-dream in a filmy haze that softened every sharp color and rounded every angle. In his eyes was the prophet's vision which no other man might see.

"You are young — from ten to sixteen or seventeen at most, shall I say?" looking from the least to the tallest there, "given ten years and then count your dark days, and remember what I have said to you."

Only one pair of eyes looked steadily into the eyes of the speaker — Mark Darrow — fourteen years old, with a man's voice and a daring speech.

The stranger took up his reins again, and with no further word passed on his way down the winding Trail and was soon out of sight.

"I hope that's the last of him," Craig declared, when the man was out of hearing. "Talk about trouble — it will come by the bucketful wherever he is. He's a trouble-maker, I know."

"I wish I'd asked him his name," Mark said. "I liked him. I don't know why, but I did."

"Well, let him go now. What was it that scared you down in the woods, Mark?" Elliot asked.

"Didn't anything scare me," Mark declared, stoutly, "but right where the rocks hang over the Trail I heard the queerest noise. A kind of a groan, and something went 'sth.' I didn't wait to hear any more."

"Was that what made you come up the hill so fast behind us?" queried Lucy.

"Oh, Mark, did you really hear anything?" Joe shivered with fear.

"No, he didn't, Joe. He just thought he did," Beth said, soothingly.

"I know I did. Just like somebody was there." The boy turned defiantly before the company.

Unconsciously they were in family groups. Craig and Lucy Penwin stood side by side, with Tarleton clutching his big brother's coat sleeve. Joe Darrow had crowded up against Elliot. In front and between the two groups stood Beth. Joe and Tarley still held their grapevine trailing on the ground behind all of them.

Mark never forgot that picture. One day long afterward, it came back to him with wonderful vividness. The laughing eyes and teasing words, the pretty girlish face of Lucy Penwin, and Beth with her golden hair, Joe and Tarley joined by the grapevine tie, and Craig and Elliot on either side of the girl who was to be more and more in their thoughts in the coming years —the ten years of trouble of which the stranger had warned them.

The place grew suddenly lonely. The sun was low in the west now, and the wooded path was full of shadows. The children did not care to wait for the horsemen in the ravine to appear again on the Trail. After all, they were not sure who these men might be, and with all their joking, what Mark had told them made the woods seem different.

They had left the edge of the height and were in the heavier timber on their homeward way, when a cry—a long, sharp cry of fear—cut the stillness of the plains. It came from the ravine near the Hole in the Rock. Up on the wooded places it sounded only faintly to the ears of the young people, and they had no definite notion of the direction whence it came. So they only hurried on their way.

CHAPTER II

THE HOLE IN THE ROCK

I hate the dreadful hollow behind the little wood,
Its lips in the field below are dabbled with blood-red heath;
The red-ribbed ledges drip with a silent horror of blood,
And Echo there, whatever is asked her, answers, "Death."
— Tennyson.

THE ravine seemed only a little crack across the landscape. Low timber-tops marked its way, green in the summer, black in the winter, from an insignificant beginning in the southwest to where it falls into the wooded bottoms of the Wakarusa. The Trail narrowed at the crossing, slipping down suddenly from the open slope to the shaded hollow, and up again by a short climb to the rougher-rolling prairie on the west. Save in spots, the stream was small and shallow, but the whole length of the ravine was full of rocky places, darkened pathways and uncertain pools. Among these, the "Hole in the Rock," an ugly, black, still thing, lay so darkly shadowed, it might almost have escaped the eye of a stranger. Once seen, however, it was not easily forgotten. It was full thirty feet deep, and cruelly smooth, reminding one of nothing else so much as the lidless eye of a motionless snake watching its victim.

Colonel Boniface Penwin sat on a red roan horse beside the Trail crossing, looking steadily at the waters beyond. They seemed to be rocking slowly as from some disturbance. A bubble whitened on the surface and vanished. Then more bubbles came from somewhere deep down,

slowly one by one, as from a settling misplacement underneath, until at last the dull waters found their level and held it.

Colonel Penwin sat a horse well. He was of robust frame, and in his every motion there was the hint of the well-bred military man and Southern gentleman. His features were regular and handsome, and the abundance of light, auburn hair, worn a trifle long, gave a distinguished touch to his appearance. Just now his face was set in stern lines; his cheeks above his auburn beard were stone-hued, and his gray eyes were like circles of gray steel.

The last bubble on the pool had vanished into thin air as David Lamond and Hiram Darrow rode into the ravine. Both men were plainly dressed, after the manner of the first settlers of the prairies. The former carried a shotgun on his saddle bow, the latter was unarmed. Lamond was a well-built man, with the physique the frontier requires. A fair-haired Scotchman, with an honest face, a firm mouth, and a muscular fist. It would be easy guessing where to find him in the battles of his day. He had been born on the old headland of Ardlamond, in Scotland. The strength of the bitter northern clime was in his blood; the readiness to fight for a just cause was in his brawny arm; while bluntness of speech, hatred of a lie, tenacity to a conviction, shrewdness in reading men's purposes, and unyielding faith in the power of God omnipotent — all were his; and with these, the tender love of old Scotch traditions and faithfulness to the land of his birth had given him high notions of loyalty, and made the Stars and Stripes now the symbol of his supremest duty and power.

He had heard the call of Kansas for Free-State settlers, when it became a Territory, and leaving his pic-

turesque home and Scotch neighbors in the beautiful Alleghany Mountain region of Pennsylvania, had hurried hither in answer to that call. Small matter to him that in these open, rolling prairies there was nothing suggestive of the home life and associations of Pennsylvania. He struck root easily in any soil, not from a fickle inconstancy, but because of his firm sense of loyalty, that knew no law of locality.

Hiram Darrow might at first seem out of place in the harshness of the frontier settlements. Imprinted on his scholarly face were dignity of thought, self-possession, and courage. And with these the inheritance of a long line of Quaker ancestry had bred in him a gentleness of manner, a power void of violence. The Call of the West had been a spiritual voice to him, bidding him cast his strength, not for the flag alone, but for the larger freedom of the human race.

The characterization of these two men Mark Darrow had summed up once in the declaration:

"David Lamond wouldn't begin any row, but he wouldn't wait to be hit before he got in a big lick himself; but when the dust settled at last, I'll bet if any man was standing solid on his own two feet it would be my daddy."

"And I'm just like both of 'em," the boy usually added, with Elliot finishing:

"Plus the cussedness you get from the Lord knows where, and your hotheaded foolishness."

These two men were types of the real State-builders of the West. Small space is given to such types in history, for history has space only for dramatic climaxes of events.

On the threshold of Kansas these two settlers, thrown together by mere chance, with others of like mettle from

New England and Ohio, had found their cause awaiting them. Boniface Penwin, their nearest neighbor, had at first been friendly, after the frontier fashion. With the passing of the summer, however, his contempt for what he had first termed harmless Yankee fanatics was changing to a wholesome respect and a growing hatred that awaited only the arrival of others of his breed, or the lining up of political parties to touch to explosion. For, with his native courtesy and good breeding, Penwin was a man of quick, violent passions.

Meanwhile, the growing friendship of the children of the three families, transplanted in this lonely new land, had helped somewhat to hold back the inevitable moment of disruption. That moment, following the journey of the three to Lawrence, this October day was destined to bring.

The two men approached the crossing and reined in their horses opposite the Colonel.

"Good evening, Penwin," Lamond greeted him. "You didn't stay to the election. Somebody at the Eldridge House, Merriford, I believe it was, said you had gone across the Kaw to the Delaware Reservation. You missed getting an office, I am sure. Darrow and I are both delegates to the Topeka convention."

The Colonel's face was still gray and changeless, as he replied:

"I went up to Leavenworth. My business was important."

"Been getting a new horse?" Lamond asked.

"Yes, sir, I traded for him, coming home," Penwin answered, carelessly.

"Thee traded for that horse coming from Leavenworth?" Hiram Darrow spoke, slowly. "What did thee offer by way of trade?"

"Oh, I gave the bay colt," the Colonel said.

"Any boot go with it?" queried Darrow.

Colonel Penwin's eyes burned.

"Now, see here, Darrow, you think I stole this horse, don't you? I'll be ——" He did not finish the sentence.

Lamond and Darrow exchanged glances.

"Go on, Penwin. Thee has something more on thy mind. Why not say it now? I don't think thee stole that horse. Does thee think thee did?"

The gray hue was swept from Penwin's face by a fierce anger flame, and his eyes took on the color of the Hole in the Rock, but his sense of courtesy controlled him still as he spoke.

"Gentlemen, we may as well end this farce now. Last April we found ourselves neighbors in the wilderness here. One of you came from a little Quaker town in Indiana and the other from further east. There are twenty claims of land taken up now, where there was only one six months ago. Next spring will see a hundred for every twenty this fall. I don't care what brings you nor any other man to this new Territory, but, before God, I had only one purpose in coming from Georgia to Kansas."

There was a slight rustling in the bushes beyond the black pool, and a single bubble rose to the surface and hung there like a clear, menacing eye in the darkness.

"I came here just as I know hundreds of other men are coming now and will keep on coming — to make this a land of liberty for gentlemen, where they can control their own possessions, and extend the great industrial institution of slavery without any Yankee interference. And, by the God in heaven, there is no power that can prevent them. These prairies are going to be tilled by black hands, and white hands will own

and direct them. And they will always do it. Under the old English law a man's property is his own just as much as his soul is his own, and the sooner these fool stupid Yankees learn that, the better it will be for them."

Lamond's eyes were flashing, and his square jaws set like a vise.

"There is no use mincing words, gentlemen," the Colonel went on. "We have been peaceful neighbors these few months we have known each other, and I have liked you fellows well as neighbors. But this Territory and its concerns are stronger than any neighborhood business. Human rights are the biggest interests of any nation. I didn't go up to Lawrence to have any part in that election of delegates. I knew you would be chosen. And you will go to the Topeka convention next week for just one thing — to make a State Constitution that will keep slaveholders from coming into Kansas,— to make a State hide-bound by sectional tyrants who want to own all these fair prairies themselves. I'm here, gentlemen, to establish my right to own niggers, and I'm going to do it. Neighbor or stranger, I tell you now, I'll send the first man to hell who tries to stop me. And I won't know a damned abolitionist from any other dead man, either."

The gray color had come back to Penwin's countenance again, and his every muscle was tense. Lamond clutched hard on the butt of his shotgun; but Darrow, leaning forward carelessly, combed out his horse's mane with his fingers.

"Is that all?" he asked, quietly.

"Well, isn't it enough for you to see just where you are? Don't say I didn't warn you, and go whining that you didn't understand when the issue comes, as it

will come, damned soon. And I can settle our part of it with you fellows any minute you want to do it."

Penwin's voice rose to a shout. There was a savage venom in his eyes as he finished, and he sat as if ready to spring to action. But Darrow only lifted his hand in gentle motion.

"I am not afraid of thee, Penwin. I ask for no mercy. I'll measure chances with thee any day. Human rights are a nation's biggest interest. That's why I am an abolitionist, and that is just why I came to Kansas." Darrow's face was serene and void of fear.

Colonel Penwin's hands twitched as if held back from the Quaker's throat. And Lamond, with both fists clenched, now burst out:

"We knew you were a Southern sympathizer, Penwin, but we mistook you for a gentleman. If you think you can settle this question here, and want to fight, come on. You and all your kind will find us ready for you."

He leaped the crossing at a bound, but Darrow, following quickly, wheeled the white horse between the black and the roan.

"Do questions of state rest on a struggle between two or three men in a lonely ravine in Kansas?" he asked. "Don't fight till thee must, David."

"When would you fight, you coward?" Penwin hissed out the question.

"Never," answered Darrow, "and I may be living here in a peaceful land untainted by slavery, black or white, when thee and thy kind are overcome. But if I perish, I perish. Beyond me lies an issue larger than the interest of any single man. It must triumph."

"God grant it," came a fervent voice from beyond the three, and a man on horseback, the same man whom the

"Don't fight till thee must, David"

children on the bluff had directed hither, appeared suddenly in the Trail.

The three men turned at his words, and Penwin hastily backed his horse to the farther side of the stream, leaving this man with the other two on the hither side. The last rays of the October sunset smote through the tree-tops, filling the upper air with a golden gray light. Down in the ravine the warm languor of the afternoon had given place to the evening's chill, and the shadows were gathering thick about the Hole in the Rock.

Lined up on either side of the little thread of waters were the forces that stood that day for a nation-wide conflict. On the one hand was the Southern settler, strong, defiant, sure of himself and of his possession of power, dogged in his determination to sweep every obstacle from his way, however brutal the force might be that did it. Yet there was something imposing about him. To himself his cause was just. He was no mere highway ruffian. He had come to the West to make Kansas a Slave Territory, to build Empire broadly—according to his own conception of breadth. It troubled him nothing that in this State-building, human life must run cheap and broken hearts and tortured bodies must be piled into the trenches of its foundations. Under other skies he might not have been by nature cold-blooded and brutal; but the sure heritage of a slave-ridden land is not more in the curse of bondage to the enslaved than in the curse of warped spiritual natures and brutalized sensibilities, and degraded ideals in the enslavers.

On the hither side of the stream three men sat still on their horses facing Colonel Penwin: David Lamond, the fighting Scotchman; Hiram Darrow, the Quaker; and this stranger, whose eyes saw only tragedy, whose soul was bounding on to victory.

Even in the stillness of the moment these men on either side of the little water run, intent on each other, failed to note the crackling of twigs beyond them and the faint rasp of a button or bead against a stone. In that moment a black face with staring eyes of terror and hate peered through the bushes overhanging the Hole in the Rock. An instant only and then a gray, green foliage settled above the waters. At the same time, around the bare, black rock-shelf above the crossing, another face showed itself for a moment, as a beaded moccasin scraped the tight crevice of the uncertain foothold; a coppery face, with cold, black eyes, fearless, and still as the pool below.

The stranger was the first to speak.

"This is Hiram Darrow, and this is David Lamond. Am I right?" he queried.

The men nodded assent.

"And this is Colonel Boniface Penwin, late of Georgia."

Penwin did not reply, but sat looking straight at the questioner.

"Never mind," the man went on, "I knew of you before I came here. My business was with these two on this side of the water, but I'll make it my business to tell you, Boniface Penwin, that though the day of God's judgment and God's vengeance may seem long in coming, it will come; though you and your kind may believe you can control the West, and plant it, and reap it with the toil of black human chattels, fettered feet shall never walk these prairies, nor shackled hands be lifted in prayer for deliverance under these free skies. And this shall never be a slave-ridden State, though every Kansas stream run red with human blood, and every black pool of water hold a human corpse."

Was there a low moan of fear and agony somewhere in the shadows, down the water way, or was it only the sighing of the wind in the ravine? On the dull surface of the Hole in the Rock two ghastly white bubbles with a little streak of white foam close under them suggested a dark face with staring eyes and white, grinning teeth. Only Penwin saw this, however, and the heart of the Sphinx was scarce colder than his own still heart as he gazed.

Lamond and Darrow saw only the speaker's face illumined with a strange power. They heard nothing but his steady voice, under whose tone ran a minor chord of tragedy.

"I heard you state your purpose in coming here, Penwin," he continued, "and I know from your Southern States an army of slave drivers is heading this way to join another army across the border here. They are coming to trample down everything before them. No man, nor woman, nor child will be sacred to them. All human life will be as trash for their plunder. The system of slavery makes such beasts out of men. And they count on their numbers and their brutal power to win the day. But they will not win. In the old Hebrew times, the Lord promised to be a wall of fire round about his people. There 'll be no wall of fire here, but a wall of men on this frontier, standing up in the strength of God Almighty, will be round about the State of Kansas and build into it the eternal right of human liberty. And to this building I give myself, even my life."

"And I."

"And I."

Darrow and Lamond responded reverently.

The bubbles went where all bubbles go. The foam was only little scattered white flecks now. The dark water

was glassy in the last beams of the sunset, the bushes were still, the stone ledges gave out no rasping sound.

Across the stream Colonel Penwin was himself again.

"I will not waste time with fanatics," he said, in a low voice. "When the crisis comes, ask no quarter of me, for I shall not know what you mean. As for you, stranger, you'll fight your last battle on the gallows-tree and fall from it into an infamous grave."

"If I have but fought for the freedom of my fellow men, I shall care little for the last bar over which I struggle into eternity."

Penwin wheeled his horse at these words and dashed up the steep slope of the ravine. The other three climbed up the east bank and followed the Trail toward the wooded bluff.

"Will thee come home with me, stranger?" queried Darrow.

"Yes, for the night," the man replied.

"Come over after supper, Lamond, and let us talk of these matters. The very air is full of trouble," Darrow went on, as a cold autumn breeze came sweeping out of the far west.

Lamond assented, and soon separated from them to follow the by-trail to his own holding.

Down in the ravine a fleet-footed Delaware Indian, keeping close in the shadows, slipped noiseless up the stream; while, creeping from one hiding-place to another, a huge African, with gleaming eyes and thumping heart, followed the downward course of the waters.

CHAPTER III

DARRARAT"

Give me men to match my mountains,
Give me men to match my plains;
Men with empires in their bosoms,
Men with eras in their brains.

THE western sky was still roseate with the after-sunset glow, and the purple east was deepening in the autumn twilight, when Hiram Darrow and his new acquaintance climbed the slope to the Darrow home. It stood on a swell overlooking the Vinland Valley. A clump of evergreens sheltered it round about. Although six months before there had been here only virgin prairie, already there were many tokens of a thrifty, permanent abiding-place. Like the oasis to the desert-sick traveler, it seemed a haven to the stranger journeying hither for the first time, heartsick for the comforts of the home-life back in the States. Built of logs, it was in reality four little cabins set near enough together to leave roofed hallways running between each two, and meeting in the center in a roomy opening large enough for the family gathering together. Where the kitchen cabin cornered into this space the stone chimney was built, serving on its two sides the double purpose of cooking-place in the kitchen and a wide fireplace in the hall.

Above this central open space the boys had built a rude sort of tower cornering against the chimney, with

windows swinging in on stout leather hinges fastened at the top. A rough shelf two feet wide, formed by logs above, made a good place for an outlook. And here Mark had constructed a narrow seat where he could sit and watch the surrounding country as he chose. These windows served also to give light and ventilation to the space about the fireplace below. The tower was reached only by climbing the log angle of one of the cabin rooms cornering below it. But climbing was a part of Mark's business in life. He had christened the nook "Darrarat," which he said was short for Darrow "Ararat," and it was his lookout for the Dove of Peace if it ever found an olive-branch to bring Kansasward.

About this cabin home the morning-glory vines were still green, and little patches of bluegrass in one Summer had already encroached on the untamed domain of the prairie sod. The firelight gleamed warm and rosy through the south windows, a welcome beacon to the two men far down the Trail, who caught its glow twinkling through the evergreens.

"Ship ahoy!" cried Mark from his outlook up in his "Darrarat." "Joe, tell mother I see two suspicious-looking characters approaching stealthily from the west. By their mysterious actions they must be intending to raid this castle. Hustle, Joe!"

Joe made a rush for the door, shouting toward the kitchen cabin, "Mother, Mother, Mark says father's coming!"

Isabel Darrow stood in the doorway and watched the two men riding homeward in the purple shadows of evening. The soft, west light illumined her face and touched to clearer outline the setting in which she made a picture fair to see. For she was a beautiful woman, with the lasting matronly beauty of a madonna. Her heavy, dark

hair, parted and combed smoothly away from her forehead, lay in soft folds about her head, giving it Greek outlines rather than Quaker plainness. Her eyes were large and dark. The roses in one Kansas Summer had not faded from her cheeks, and her smile was irresistible. Not often does the charm of girlhood become so strongly the heritage of womanhood. But back of Nature's gifts to this Quaker woman was the larger heritage of brain and heart, combined with the vigor only good health can sustain. With such a woman at his hearthstone, it was easy to understand why Hiram Darrow could face the future hopefully in this new, frontier home-building.

"Here we are, Isabel," was her husband's greeting as, with his stranger companion, he entered the hall. "This is a friend I found down the Trail. Thee will welcome him for the night, dearie."

"What is thy name?" asked Isabel, smiling, and extending her hand.

"My name is John Brown," said the stranger. "I shall be glad to spend the night here, for I have much to say to your husband."

"Thee is very welcome. Come, Hiram, the supper is ready, and the boys are hungry."

Mark was the last to reach the table. As he sat down, his eyes sought John Brown's in one long gaze. A shiver of fear shook Isabel Darrow — she did not know why. Some faint sense of coming ill, too fleeting to fasten in memory, possessed her for the moment.

In the early Quaker homes the younger members entered little into the conversation of their elders. The boys in the Darrow household listened eagerly, but said nothing at the supper table that night, while their father and mother talked with their guest. When the meal was ended, Mark and Joe were the first to leave the kitchen.

"Children should be seen and not heard. Run in there, Joey dear, and let 'em look at thee, but don't thee cheep, little chickie." Mark pushed Joe before him into the hall as the others rose from the table.

"My job is to hear, if I am not heard; and to see, when I am not seen," he declared further, as he heaped wood on the smoldering fire on the hearthstone.

As the flames leaped up and the shadows flared about the corners, Joe, tired from his long tramp of the afternoon, dropped into his chair in the corner, forgetting to note which way Mark had headed with his last words. Joe would be asleep in five minutes, for that was what night meant to him.

There was only one topic discussed in Kansas in those days: Territorial settlement and the right to the balance of power at the ballot box. Every month saw the incoming of new settlers, whose opinions on this topic was the first census taken in the Territory. Already invaders from across the eastern border had come with mob violence to control political elections. Three-fourths of all the ballots at these elections had been cast by men who never intended to make a home nor claim a citizenship in Kansas. They came only for the day, to vote into power the men and measures that should fasten a Southern institution upon a land, regardless of the rights and wishes of those to whom the land belonged. In these days of peace and justice, and broader views and forgotten prejudices, and the buried bitterness of hatreds, the tragic reality and sweet romance and sublime heroism of that day of State-building seem only as a tale that is told. By the flickering hearth fire in the little Darrow home, that long ago October night, it was a very real and present problem, fraught with all the grief and danger

and cruel outrage of justice crucified, that made each day of those early years a day of historic worth.

John Brown sat long in silence, gazing at the leaping flames and glowing embers. On either side of the hearth sat Hiram and Isabel Darrow. Little Joe nodded in the corner, and forgot all his troubles in the drowsy warmth.

"Mother, I'm going over to Lamond's," Elliot said, softly, coming behind his mother's chair, and placing a hand gently on her shoulder. "I have all thy dishes washed. Mark, the lazy dog, never put his head inside the kitchen since he broke out of here with Joe. He can take his turn to-morrow." Elliot smiled down on his mother, and with a gentle good-by gesture, slipped away.

Outside of the door he caught sight of a shadow that swung quickly behind a cedar tree. He leaped after it, but whatever had made it was too swift for him, and the night breeze sweeping up the slope bent all the dark evergreens before it and swung fantastic shadows in the moonlight. Elliot stood still a moment, doubting that he had seen anything but the wind-drifted shade of the cedar, when a lull in the breeze showed his quick eye a dark form only a few feet away. It fled so quickly that it seemed at first to melt into the evergreens, and then, like a flash, it passed beyond the corner of the house.

The game was interesting now, and Elliot searched every shaded spot and watched each evergreen shrub.

"Mark; hello, Mark," he called, "I'll give it up."

But no Mark appeared, and a slight noise caught his ear. A foot on wood somewhere. Elliot looked in every direction.

"All right, Mark, you will-o'-the-wisp, I'm going to quit now; good-by!" and whistling a little strain of an

old love song he strode away in the moonlight toward the cabin home of David Lamond.

Inside the Darrow cabin John Brown was the first to speak.

"Hiram Darrow, there is only one issue in our Nation to-day. It centers here in Kansas. There is only one thing to do, and that is to meet this issue. There is only one way to meet it."

The speaker lifted his eyes from the flaming wood, and gazed upward, raising his big right hand as he spoke. The firelight fell full on his face. It was not a brutal nor stupid face. No line of hatred marked it, no dull blood-lust bleared the clear vision. But a sense of prophetic, irresistible power dwelt around the temples and set the stern lips.

"There is only one way to meet it," the speaker repeated. "The stain of sin must be washed out with human blood."

"God forbid!" exclaimed Hiram Darrow. "Did not the Christ come to bring peace on earth?"

"He came not to bring peace, but a sword. He said it himself to the people of his time. Darrow, why did you come here if you do not mean to make this a free land?"

"I stand for the freedom that saves life, not destroys it. That's why I am here. Thee cannot build up life on death, friend Brown. The mills of the gods grind slowly, but the grist must be golden, not tainted with human gore."

"You will wait till the Judgment Day before you save this Territory without bloodshed," ejaculated Brown.

"That's what we ought to wait for," calmly replied the Quaker. "'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' saith the Lord."

"Yes, yes; but there are chosen instruments, vessels

of the temple. I am afraid that you Quaker people are not the people who will move the world."

There was a note of impatience in Brown's voice.

"Maybe not, maybe not, but we anchor it somewhat, with an anchor both sure and steadfast."

The burning logs fell apart, and Darrow, standing to push the pieces together, caught a faint, tapping sound at the south window.

"It is only Mark's cat," said Isabel. "I'll let her in the kitchen. Come, Joe, thee must go to bed."

Little Joe wabbled off, half asleep, to his cot beside his mother's bed, and Mrs. Darrow, after setting things to rights, opened the kitchen door to let in the big tabby cat Mark had brought with them all the way from Indiana. Outside there was a glory of October moonlight, and the night had lost the first promise of evening chill. A sweet, bracing breeze blew up from the south, and the whole Vinland Valley swam in a silver radiance touched here and there with purple shadows, and over all brooded the sweet serenity of the heavens, crystal clear and exquisitely lovely.

Far down the white Trail, two figures were moving swiftly along. But before she had time to note them, a dark form loomed up between her and the moonlit Trail, and a huge negro stepped toward the doorway. In the soft light Mrs. Darrow's face shone fair and fearless, and her smile was as sweet as her words were genial.

"How does thee do? I thought it was the cat I heard. Will thee come in?"

The man made one step toward the door, then, stopping, he bowed courteously, after the fashion of the Southern negro.

"I don't think I dare"—he hesitated—"I is a free man, I is not a slave, but I is not wanted here. I would

make trouble for you all. But I is so hungry. If you all give me some supper, I'll go on." His voice had the musical African softness, but his words came slowly, and there was fear in his very tone.

"Come in, thee is welcome here," and Isabel Darrow led the way into the little kitchen. "Sit down and wait a minute. Thee must be tired. Where did thee come from?"

She was setting out food, cold meat, corn bread, a little butter and molasses, and over the fire the coffee-pot was beginning to send out its own fragrant welcome to the hungry, when the voices of the men came through the half-closed door.

"I tell you, Darrow, no negro's life is safe here, nor anywhere North or South, and the curse of the Almighty will plague this land with famine and fire and sword."

The black man in the kitchen leaped toward the door. His teeth chattered and his eyes gleamed.

"Give me just one bite, and I's gone. Thank you all, dat coffee"—how appetizing a plague that drink can be—"Dat do smell good."

"Thee is safe here. Thee is hungry. Thee must eat something."

By the flaring candle-light that little cabin held a picture only a master's hand could paint. The great, dark form before the doorway, with hunger-gaunt face and staring eyes, the strength of a giant in his muscular arm, the weakness of a child in his simple mind and overwhelming fear, and beyond him, in the uncertain light, the sweet-faced Quaker woman, calm, fearless, smiling kindly, with the unconscious grace of her womanhood like a garment about her, and a power of mind and voice—the only real power—that controls men.

"Sit down, friend. Thee need not be afraid in this house."

The hand, reaching for the offered food, shook violently, and the face was swept by a wave of fear.

"Are you, 'fore God, sure I's safe, lady?" he begged.

"I'll show thee how safe."

She stepped into the hall. "Come, Father, here is a poor black man in the kitchen."

Darrow and Brown hurried in.

"He is afraid to eat his supper here," Isabel explained.

John Brown strode across the room and took the negro's hand in his. A look of recognition passed between the two.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Jupe, just Jupe, is all." The white teeth gleamed in a grin, with the quick change from fear to unconcern so characteristic to the race.

"Well, eat your supper, Jupe, and then get to Lawrence as fast as you can, and stay there."

"If I kin find Mars'r Merriford up to Lawrence I sure stay whar he is," and the negro fell to eating like a ravenous dog.

"How far have you traveled, Jupe?" Darrow asked.

A look of shrewd cunning lit Jupe's eye as he answered, guardedly: "Oh, from a good ways; an' I ain't nevah gwine back to measure hit off no more. No, sah. I's traveled a mighty sight, for I's a Norf and Souf nigga', bofe, an' I don't tell all I knows, neither."

There was a rapping at the front door and Darrow left the kitchen. John Brown, by the window, was looking out toward the Vinland Valley.

Mrs. Darrow had turned away to pour a second cup of coffee. Jupe, unconscious of the light behind him, made a stride toward the hall, unnoticed by the two in the

kitchen; and, leaning through the door, peered with frightened eyes after his host. The voice of Craig Penwin came through the open south door.

"Are the boys here?"

"Isabel, where is Elliot?" his father called from the doorway.

"He went over to Lamond's," answered Isabel as she came into the hall. "Mark is in bed and asleep, I suppose. He was off right after supper. I'll call him," and she called down the dark hall, but no answer came from Mark.

"Never mind, Mrs. Darrow," Craig said, courteously; "good-night, sir," and he was gone.

As he left the front door Jupe slipped through the kitchen door and became only a part of the black shadows outside. Half way down the slope Craig saw two men who had turned from the Trail toward the cabin. He stepped among the evergreen shadows and waited their coming.

"I may as well see what's going on up here," he said to himself. "There was a nigger in the kitchen if that candle light didn't lie, and here come two men. Looks interesting, only I hope father has no hand in it." A sadness crept into the proud face for the moment. "Well, here's David Lamond and an Indian. What can all this mean?" A fear seized him. "There is nothing but trouble in this place."

He waited until the two men had passed into the house, then, keeping close to the shadows, he crept round to the west window and cautiously peered in. He could see the group around the fire, but could not hear their words. The Indian, half in shadow, sat in silence, while the other men talked eagerly.

"My, but Elliot's mother is a pretty woman, and Elliot

looks just like her, the scamp. I wonder where Mark is. Not in bed, I'll bet a horse."

The longer he looked the stronger became his curiosity to hear what was being so vehemently discussed. It was more the eager curiosity of youth than any base motive that prompted Craig Penwin here.

"If I was up above there I could hear all they say. I believe I'll try it. The boys have fixed little windows that open up there. Elliot and I got in through one of them once when the house was locked and the folks were away."

Inside the cabin Lamond was talking excitedly.

"This is the Delaware, White Turkey, we saw in Lawrence, Darrow; you remember Merriford told us about him. He says he followed us nearly to the ravine because he has reasons to think we are in danger. He turned aside because he could n't overtake us in time. There 's something wrong somewhere. He came to our house this evening and wanted me to come up here with him to warn you. White Turkey, tell the men what is on your mind."

Isabel Darrow, who had sat quietly during all this time, suddenly spoke: "Hiram, we have seen this Indian before. Did n't thee come here one night last April, cold, and wet, and hungry, when we had just finished this house?"

She had turned to the Indian. White Turkey's face did not change as he answered gravely:

"Me cold, wet, hungry, over there," pointing toward the south. "Me ask Penwin, Georgia man, him let me stay by horses in stable. Him send me off in dark, not let me stay away over there," pointing southward again toward Colonel Penwin's home. "Me come here; white woman say come in. Give White Turkey meat. Give

coffee. Let White Turkey sleep there," pointing toward the kitchen, "by warm fire. White Turkey not forget. While winds blow and Wakarusa runs down to Kaw, White Turkey not forget."

"But now, what about this matter to-day?" queried Darrow. "Of course, we would n't let thee suffer for anything if we could help it. Tell us about this business now."

White Turkey looked steadily at John Brown.

"Who?" he queried.

"A friend of humanity. Thee need not fear," answered Hiram. "Go on, do."

White Turkey deliberated.

"We are all friends — all of one mind," declared Lamond. "Tell us anything that concerns us."

"White Turkey — me," pointing to himself, "hear Colonel Penwin talk big talk in Eldridge House. When he slips across the Kaw River at midnight, over to Delaware's wigwam, me know him quick. He come to Delaware house, he offer big money if Delawares go help him stop men in ravine by Hole in the Rock. Say he want to meet them near where Trail cross by Hole in the Rock. Say men bad and kill somebody. Say he show Delawares how to stop men if they go. Delawares poor; want money. Indians not rich like Colonel Penwin. Delawares say they go. Penwin hurry away. White Turkey speak then. Tell Delaware brothers Quaker man and woman good to White Turkey. Penwin drive me away in cold and dark and wet, hungry. Maybe men Penwin after Quaker men. Shall Delaware braves help Penwin? No — " with a wave of his hand the Indian ceased.

"And so you really did follow us, did you? You thought we would get in trouble?" asked Lamond.

"White Turkey not want you to meet by Hole in the Rock; not know sure what men Penwin want to meet there."

"What became of your horse?" asked Lamond.

The Indian only shook his head in response.

"Can't you tell us that?" Lamond put the question carefully.

"No"—and White Turkey had closed his straight, thin lip like the shell of an oyster.

"Never mind now," Brown suggested. "He has told us all he wants to tell; let him alone and trust him. I want to talk to you about other matters, Lamond. Darrow and I differ about conditions. He thinks Kansas can be saved by prayer and fasting."

"I know it cannot," the Scotchman spoke quickly. "If we may believe this Indian, our foes may be our nearest neighbors. There must be war to the sword hilt before these prairies are free men's soil."

"It is not our own safety in a savage frontier that disturbs thee, Lamond. I know thee better than that," Darrow said gently. "This Indian need not make us uneasy. Our times are in God's hands. The greater thing is the peril of a slave-cursed nation."

"And, by the eternal God, that peril must be met—violence with violence. I am ready to do my share, else I should never have come here." Lamond stood up in the splendid strength and vigor and courage of a hero unafraid. "Our wives must take care of our homes, for every man and boy must stand for or against the coming tide of violence. In no other way will Kansas be saved."

Isabel Darrow, on the further side of the hearthstone, rose from her chair, her dark eyes burning with a strange glow.

"Thee is right, David Lamond. Before heaven, thee has spoken the truth. I can do my part if I must." Her voice rang sweet and clear.

"Isabel, Isabel, what does thee mean?" her husband cried.

"Thee will do thy part too, Hiram; I know thee will," his wife said.

"So will we all." It was John Brown who spoke now. "Men and boys, women and children, Indian and negro slave. The hour will strike soon."

"I will not lift my hand against my fellow man though the heavens fall."

No hint of cowardice was in Hiram Darrow's tone, no quiver of fear in his white, calm face, and it would have been hard to say at that moment which man might be the strongest there in the wall of defence for the helpless new Territory.

Craig Penwin, up on the roof, had cautiously worked his way to the stone chimney, and carefully pushed in the little swinging window. The moon was just above him, and its white beams fell full on the brown head and intent face of Mark Darrow, listening eagerly, unmindful of anything but the group about the flickering fire below. It was the night of destiny for Mark.

CHAPTER IV

IN THE EVENING TIME

Together we walked in the evening time,
Above us the sky spread golden and clear;
And he bent his head and looked in my eyes,
As if he held me of all most dear.
Oh! it was sweet in the evening time!

BETH LAMOND and her mother sat alone in the moonlit cabin. A neat little place it was, with many an ingenious device for comforts that were lacking in most frontier homes. Lamond had been slow in completing his house. It was not until the mid-June after his coming to the West that it was ready for use. But when it was ready, it was useful. It was a stout little three-roomed stone cabin with walls almost two feet thick, sheltered on the north by a high ridge and on the west by a patch of thin young timber, with a wide outlook to the eastward, and the wooded range on the south hiding the Santa Fé Trail. Whatever Lamond undertook he never left half done. He had built in cupboards and fixed pantry shelves. In the corner of the small living-room he had made an old-fashioned settle, a cozy and comfortable thing, giving the room a homelike feature. He had walled the tiny cellar and spread the bottom with rough flat stones brought from the shelving ledges of the ravine. On the south a quaint little stone-floored porch, with broad roof held up by supports of rough masonry, made a picturesque entrance to

the dwelling. Between the house and the stables ran a rough stone pathway. At the well-curb, half way between the two, was a trellis ready for next season's vines. Around the house the English ivy had already taken root and begun its slow growth upon the stone walls and about the porch pillars. In time it would become a hardy, permanent decoration in place of the abundant wealth of morning-glory vines which perish year by year.

Only one dwelling could be seen from this spot in that autumn time; the mere top of Mark's "Darrarat" stood up in the east above a rolling bit of prairie not yet taken up by homesteaders.

The October moonlight silvered all the stones, and turned to deepest purple every green leaf and every shadow playing about the sheltered place. Elliot Darrow whistling an old love tune, came over the prairie with swinging step, straight as the crow flies, from the Darrow homestead, bearing down upon the little stone cabin of David Lamond. He halted at the vine-decked porch long enough to catch the lacey play of light and shade across the stone floor. He was still whistling softly, although he did not know it, and his footstep was lighter on the stones before the doorway. His dark eyes were full of tender light, and the quiet beauty of the evening held him in its spell.

"Listen, Beth, there is somebody outside." Mrs. Lamond spoke in a low tone. She had a quick ear for sounds, and the stillness of the prairie in its quiet moods frightened her, just as its every voice in its echoing moments disturbed her. "I'm sure I heard somebody outside."

"Yes, but it's somebody whistling. I'm never afraid of anybody who whistles as he comes," Beth answered.

Through the deep casemented window she caught sight of Elliot standing on the step.

"I never knew you to be afraid of any living thing, Beth, dear."

"Well, mother, I'm not afraid of any dead thing, for where's the use to be?" And Beth opened the door.

To the young man standing outside, the picture framed before him was as a dream of things lovely. In the darkened doorway, with the moonbeams falling about her, Beth Lamond's fair face made cameo outlines, faintly pink and white, on the indefinite drapery of purple shadows.

"Good evening, Elliot; I'm glad to see you, for mother and I are alone." Beth held the door open.

"Good evening, Beth; good evening, Mrs. Lamond."

Elliot hesitated at the entrance of the dimly lighted room, and Beth put her hand on his arm to guide him.

"Here's a chair. Mother doesn't like a light when father is away. I'll get the candles."

She led him in and, seating him in her father's big armed chair in the dusky corner, turned to get the candles.

"Don't get them for me, Beth," Elliot said; "I like this light best. Such a grand evening as it is! I never saw anything like the prairie moonlight."

Beth sat down on the old-fashioned settle, where the silvery beams streaming through the window fell on her golden hair. Her eyes were dark and lustrous, and her easy pose and utter lack of affectation made her unconscious of her charm. Something in all this was exquisitely near to pain for the boy who sat in the shadows looking at her. For there leaped up in his heart a man's first understanding of love. His mind swept back over the afternoon in the woods, and set a new picture before

him. He was glad the candles were not lighted, glad even that it was Beth and not himself sitting where the moonbeams fell clearest. Half consciously he pushed his own chair into the deeper shade. He did not know why he hardly wanted to trust his own voice then, and much less did he want Beth's clear gray eyes looking straight at him.

"Did you meet Mr. Lamond and that Indian, or had they gotten to your house before you left home?" Mrs. Lamond asked, anxiously.

"I didn't see anybody; I came straight across the prairie. They must have followed the Trail. What Indian do you mean, Mrs. Lamond?"

"Oh, Elliot," cried Beth, "an Indian came here just after dark and asked father to go with him to your house. Father says he is all right, a Delaware from the reservation north of Lawrence. Mother is afraid he'll do some harm to father, but I'll risk it. I'm never afraid for father."

"No, nor for anybody else," Mrs. Lamond declared. "You can't scare her, Elliot; she fits the West all right."

Beth laughed, and, leaning back on the settle with her hands clasped behind her head, turned her face full in the light.

"I guess I'm a Lamond all right. If I were a man I'd feel like I had to fight for my country. Wouldn't you, Elliot?"

"Oh, Beth, I hope none of the men will ever need to fight," cried her mother.

"So do I," asserted Beth; "but if there was need for them you would do it, of course."

There was a martial tone in the girl's voice. In the dusk Elliot gripped hard on the arm of his chair. In

his Quaker home peace and not war had been his lifetime ideal.

"Would you want me to?" he asked in a low voice.

"What's that noise, I wonder? Listen!" Mrs. Lamond prevented Beth's answer.

Elliot rose quickly.

"It is outside, at the stables, maybe; I'll go and see," he said.

"I'll go, too," Beth declared.

"Let me get a light first," Mrs. Lamond urged; but the young folks needed no light.

"Just the black horse slipped his halter," Elliot announced from inside the dark stable.

"Just Pluto's halter off, mother," Beth called to Mrs. Lamond, waiting outside the kitchen house.

Satisfied, the mother went inside and closed the door. As the young people came slowly up the stone walk, Elliot's hand rested lightly on Beth's arm. They stopped at the well for a drink as if they were really thirsty, and then by common impulse they passed the kitchen door and came to the front of the house to enter. The night was irresistible, and to these two in the dawning moment of manhood and womanhood the world wore the old, old charm of Eden made new. An Eden no less idyllic in a lonely prairie on the frontier than in the well-groomed city park just beside the pathway of the crowd.

"Must we go in right away?" Elliot asked.

"N-no, I think mother won't be lonesome if we are out here. We are so near her. I'm so glad you came to-night."

Beth's voice was gentle now, without the ring of courage it had held when she talked of war and a man's fighting duty.

"I'm glad, too; I'm always glad to come," Elliot answered.

"Next year there will be more settlers here and it will not be quite so lonely for her. Do you hope there will be?" Beth queried.

"It depends on who they are and why they come. We may wish them back East, and that we had our prairie all to ourselves again," Elliot replied.

"What a change one year can bring," Beth said, thoughtfully. "Aren't you more than a year older than you were last October in Indiana, Elliot?"

Elliot caught his breath. It seemed years even since that idle afternoon when the children of three settlers' families had gone to search for nuts in the woods, and three of these children had sat above the Vinland Valley and watched the Trail below.

For six months these young people had known each other, had seen much of each other, for settlers were few and companionship dear. They had made much of the time, and fought back the loneliness and homesickness of the days with all manner of pastimes that life in this new land could offer. And no one as yet had thought of anything but the pleasure of companionship. And now to-night, all suddenly and unbidden, had a man's soul wakened in a boy, and the joy of it was more like pain than gladness.

"Here is the place to see the real moon. I sit out here every evening and watch and wait for what never comes."

Beth spoke half sadly and half dreamily. They were sitting on the stone step of the porch, looking out to the eastward. The dark woodland to the south was very black against that silvery light, and the West was all light and shade intermingled.

"What do you want to come, Beth?"

"Oh, people, people. This is a lonely country."

"Would you go back East if you could?"

"Would I, not?" Beth was not dreaming now. "Some thing out here grips me and holds me. I'd love to see the old home and the Pennsylvania mountains, and the clear, sweet water of the brooks there. They are not like the Wakarusa, nor that little feeder of the Hole in the Rock. It is all dear to me, but, oh, Elliot, I only want to see it. Lonely as it is here, there is — what? Hope, everywhere."

Elliot sat silent where the shadow of the rough stone pillar hid his face.

"Of course," Beth went on, "it must have been the same in Pennsylvania, when Penn and those good old Quakers in knee breeches and long queues of hair were making good real estate deals for brass beads and fancy pipes in their days of doing things east of the Blue Ridge."

Elliot laughed at Beth's picture.

"You are hard on the Quakers, Beth. We aren't such a bad lot."

"Oh, all the East has the same sameness now. Every morning out here there's a new world to conquer. Back East, with all the nice, dear things there, and they are dear, the days are like rows of pins in a pin paper. You take one out and there's only a little space and two little holes, and the next and the next are like those before the little space and the holes."

"And what of one day's work here in the West?" asked the boy, pulling leaves from the morning-glory vines, and stripping the green tissue of threads, looking all the while straight before him.

"Oh, one day in Kansas is like a rent, a sword cut;

the binding up of wounds, the shifting of all settled things to make the days afterward follow another pattern."

"Is that true of to-day?"

Beth did not note the deep voice, nor the gentle tone, as Elliot spoke. Even the tender look of the dark eyes in the shadows was something recalled afterward, but unheeded now. What she did note almost for the first time, for comradeship is careless of fine lines, and remembered always when she first had known it, was the manly strength and beauty of the face before her.

"To-day?" she mused. "Yes, to-day is altogether a new day, and to-morrow, maybe all the days, must be different for it here."

Beth did not know how like a white morning-glory her white face above her dark dress seemed at that moment as she leaned among the moonlit vines, and pushed her golden hair away from her forehead.

"Of course, we went nutting and didn't get any. That's not new, for we have all been off together in the ravine, and in the woods, and over on the East Prairie, where the plum bushes grow. But there was something about that stranger who promised us lots of trouble. He'll turn up again, sure."

"He has already. He is up at our house now, and Beth, he is the rabidest hater of slavery I ever saw. The Squatter rule will win out if his kind come often. He'll do to those Southern voters who crowded into Kansas to control our elections last Spring exactly what they would do to us. Your father will like him, for he is a fighter, not a boaster, a real bulldog at the job, now mark me."

"Father says we'll need fighters here, all we can get. This is a poor country for cowards, he says, and every man will be put to the test. Maybe every woman, too."

Then in a light tone, "I wonder where I'll be. Not back East visiting relatives, I hope. I want to be right here."

"Oh, Beth, that's what that stranger up at our house — John Brown, that's his name here at least — said to-night."

"I told you every day changed the thing, like turning the little kaleidoscope on my grandmother's parlor table back in the Alleghanies. This man will put something new into Kansas."

"And the rest of the day?" queried Elliot.

"Yes, plenty of the rest. There is father's Indian and Mark's scare down the Trail."

"Mark's fish story. If he don't see real things he makes them out of stone and sumac leaves, Mark does," and Elliot laughed.

"Elliot," Beth said gravely, "I'm no second sighter, but I somehow felt troubled when Mark was talking to that man to-day. Just a tiny bit uneasy for Mark."

"Save yourself the strength. He's all right. Just too quick to speak and rash to act. He's the odd sheep of the Darrow fold. But he'll come out all right if he don't let his rashness upset him."

"That's the very thing I thought to-day. He is so impulsive and such a capital boy. I'm afraid he may — oh — I don't know what." Beth laughed at herself.

"Well, let him go. The army of the King could n't stop him anyhow. I'll try to keep a good example before him in myself." Then more seriously, Elliot asked, "Was that all of this day to make it different?"

Beth looked away across the prairies, shimmering now in a silver mist, fine as finest mesh of woven cobweb. The soft south wind lifted the little curls about her temples, and all unconsciously the witchery of the night seemed to need her to complete its spell.

"Yes," she said, slowly; "there was that waiting up on the bluff for our fathers, not quite like ever before, for there was such an uncertainty about it all, and the three men not being together, and Craig was n't quite like himself, was he?"

"I don't know," Elliot answered quietly.

"Craig is such a fine fellow. Father likes him. Father does n't like Colonel Penwin at all, but he thinks Craig is all right. Says he 'll come through in spite of his father; and then you know Craig is a fighter, and the old Scotch Lamond blood always recognizes a good soldier anywhere."

"And I'm not a soldier. Beth, did that make any difference in the day?"

"Oh, you're all right, Elliot. I said father wants everybody to be a soldier. Mother does n't want anybody to be, see?"

"And you, Beth?"

In the shadows the set face and low voice gave no hint to the girl that a heart agony cried out where it could not be heard.

"I, oh, how do I know what I want till the time comes? Would n't Craig look fine at the head of a company?"

"I don't know; I never saw him there."

"Well, but Elliot, Colonel Penwin is splendid on horseback, don't you think he is?"

"Yes, from the outside; I don't know how he looks inside, where the real man lives."

"Elliot Darrow, you are not the same boy to-night. Is the day changing all of us? What's the matter?"

She stood up now and leaned against the stone post. Elliot rose from his seat.

"Are you the same, really and truly the same girl, Beth?" Beth did not catch the pleading in his tone.

"Am I not? Men may come and men may go, but I"—she did not finish, for Elliot had put both hands a moment on her shoulders.

"I wish you would n't, Beth."

"Would n't what?" asked Beth; "go on forever, or stay here forever. That was what I meant to say."

"I don't know what I wish." Elliot folded his arms and turned his face away.

"I know what I wish, Elliot." Winsomely sweet was her girlish face, and a gentleness enveloped her.

"What do you wish?"

"I wish the days might, some of them, stay just like pins in a row, and some people would not change."

"But you want Craig to go on with the new days, Beth."

"Yes, oh, yes; but he is Craig; I don't want everybody to. I don't want you to, Elliot."

"You like Craig better for the change?"

"Oh, yes; he will grow with the changing years. He will be a fine man, father says; so will Mark change; but I don't want to think of you any differently than right now."

She smiled up at him, a smile he never forgot. "I want you to be just the same Elliot."

"I cannot be, Beth. The new day may find me farthest of all of us from yesterday. I must go now. Good-night."

"Won't you stay till father comes?"

It was Elliot's turn to face the light now, and there was small need for the moon to soften any harsh lines, for the boy, entirely forgetful of himself, would have given joy to an artist at that moment. The sturdy young form, the shapely head, the heavy dark hair and eyes with their wonderful depths of coloring, the full red lips

that could smile so winningly, and, above this, the earnest, manly spirit that belonged always to this young Quaker, all combined to make their own model a girl might not forget. He hesitated at Beth's question, then suddenly he took her hand, took both her hands, for just one moment. The moon slipped behind some silvery curtain hung up on purpose for her convenience, and in that shadow-filled stillness, forgetful, unheeding, Elliot Darrow left a kiss on warm red lips, the first love kiss Beth's lips had ever known.

A burst of radiant glory from the re-illumined sky, the broad prairie smiling serenely under the beneficence of the night's rare loveliness, the tender caresses of the wandering south breeze, the swing of light and shadow across a far moonlit plain; and a girl caught unawares with love's first token, half happy and more than half angry, and altogether sorrowful for what she could not understand nor value; and hurrying away across the dim prairie, a young man with a heart as lonely as the wide lonely lands about him. These things made the ending of one October day in Kansas. A day that should nevermore see its counterparts set in rows like pins in a pin paper.

CHAPTER V

ANOTHER DAY THAT WAS DIFFERENT

God only knows what fate the coming morrow,
Holds in its close-shut hand—
What wave of joy, what whelming tide of sorrow,
May flood my heart's dry land.

—Ellen P. Allerton.

IT was midnight and the moon had swung far toward the western horizon. The chill of autumn filled the air. Gray clouds were creeping up from the southwest, and all the Vinland Valley lay wan and numb under its covering of thin cold mist.

Just where the Trail slips out of the black woods to the open east prairie, Elliot Darrow came face to face with Craig Penwin. Wandering about the country at night alone had not been a custom with either of the two young men. Twenty-four hours before neither would have been embarrassed by the meeting. Into each young life now, the day whose midnight was just striking had brought fateful events. And so, all suddenly, these two looked at each other with more than the suspicion of strangers. Craig was the first to speak.

"Hello, young man. Seems to me you are out pretty late." Then the sense of his own position checked him.

Elliot had by inheritance the greater self-control, but on this night the world seemed to have turned upside down for him. He wondered later why he did not come back with some joke about being out to watch Craig, as

Mark would have done. As it was, he stood motionless and silent.

"Well, why don't you speak, if you are not ashamed of yourself?" the young Southerner continued.

The truth was that Craig was desperately ashamed of his own action during the evening, and it relieved him to thrust the ill-will he held toward himself on somebody else. Elliot was even more ashamed of himself, and the bitterness of it was that he was not alone in his harsh judgment. He felt sure that Beth must despise him as much as he despised himself. In the intensity of youth his rude act seemed to shout after him so loudly he could almost believe that Craig heard it, too. And so he stood silently before his questioner, who presently added:

"Oh, I don't care what you have been up to. I am probably as well off not to know it."

He would have passed on, but, prompted by a mischievous teasing spirit, and secure of himself in Elliot's evident embarrassment, he stood for a full minute looking straight at the young man. In that minute the young Quaker found himself.

"Maybe you are just as well off not to know what I've been up to, but I don't mind telling. I was over at Lamond's. Mr. Lamond went up to our house this evening, and Beth's mother was lonesome and afraid. I think I staid too long. Mr. Lamond didn't go home till late."

All of which was true, for Elliot had gone even to the edge of the bluff overlooking the whole Vinland Valley and had sat on the log where Beth and Craig had sat and watched the Trail that long-ago afternoon full six hours before. And he had seen David Lamond on the Trail at a late hour, taking care the while that Lamond should not see him.

"And by the way, Craig, what brings you here so

late? You were n't spying down there, were you?" pointing toward the Lamond holding hidden beyond the low swell of prairie. "Were you at our house? There 's no place else to go."

Craig started suddenly, and retorted angrily:

"I guess I can go where I please, and take care of my own business."

"Then do it, and leave mine alone," and Elliot, in no wise happier than he had been before the meeting, hurried away.

Late as it was, he found his mother still sitting by the dying fire in the hall-room.

"Thee is late, dearie," she said as Elliot threw himself down on the hearth beside her. "I suppose they wanted thee to stay till David got home."

"No, they did n't, mother. I left there two hours or more ago."

"Thee did?" Isabel Darrow asked no questions, but gently stroked her son's hair. Presently she said: "Thee should have heard what I did to-night. Elliot, I wonder what the days hold for us. There are troubles ahead, but,"—how sweet and firm her voice sounded then—"I do not fear them. I hold always to the promise, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is staid on Thee.'"

Elliot looked up quickly. The firelight on his mother's face just then gave it that warm glow that painters love. It was not alone that it was a pretty face, shaded by smooth, dark hair waving a little about the temples. It was the sweetness of the peace of mind and the strength of the courageous soul behind it that made her boy spring up quickly before his mother. Putting his arms around her, he kissed her gently on the forehead.

"Mother, thee is a wonderful woman," he said, softly.

And then the memory of that other kiss swept over his mind with a shame that was near to joy, but a joy that he blushed to own, for he had no right to it, so he turned from her and went to his bed.

Meanwhile Craig Penwin walked slowly homeward. The day had been a record marker for him, and he welcomed the turn of midnight.

"I wonder what to-morrow will bring — I mean to-day, for it is past midnight now," he mused. "I'm glad I'm from Georgia and don't have to eat my heart out about the slavery of a lot of lazy niggers that are better off now than lots of fellows up in New England who get epileptic every time the Fugitive Slave Law is mentioned. I'm no beast, but I can't help my Southern inheritance and training. The trouble is these folks here will never draw the line between my father and me. I wish we were all back in Georgia. I wish father" — he stopped suddenly.

In the uncertain light the proud face showed white and sad, and the deep blue eyes were full of pain.

"I hate these Quaker abolitionists who make so much trouble, and these narrow-necked Yankees. They drive us to crime." There was a bitterness in every line of his countenance now.

The path he was following led by a clump of evergreens in whose deep shade he stopped. He was feverish and tired, and he sat on the carpet of fragrant pine needles to rest awhile. In a patch of light a few feet away a man appeared suddenly. Pausing, he seemed to peer anxiously toward the dark spot where Craig lay. Then lifting his face to the light, a groan of anguish burst from his lips, and he darted away into the blackness of the wooded Trail.

"My father! In God's name, what will this day bring?"

Craig sprang up and hurried down the Trail toward the Penwin homestead.

The warmth of the early autumn of yesterday gave place in this morning to a bitter wind and heavy drizzling, that would not be a downpour, and yet it penetrated everything with its chilly moisture. At the breakfast table Colonel Penwin smiled genially on his family. Only Craig noted his haggard look and gray color. He was king of his household and his courtesy had never failed toward his own. Back in Georgia he had been a man of moderate means but of luxurious tastes. He owned a small plantation and a dozen slaves, and had kept a name for living well, with true Southern hospitality. His wife had died at the birth of her third child, Tarleton. From that time the control of the household had been in the hands of Aunt Crystal, a faithful black servant whose life was bound up in the lives of these three children.

Lucy Penwin, a beautiful, intellectual girl, a sister of Colonel Penwin, for whom his daughter Lucy was named, had also been a member of the household. Her sudden death just before their coming to Kansas was the only real sorrow the children had yet known. They idolized their father, and under the lazy Georgia skies they would have gone on so worshipping till the end of time. They did not know nor question why he had seemed suddenly to upset the scheme of things for the whole family after their aunt's death. They knew only that in one balmy Southern springtime a change came unannounced into their lives. A spirit of unrest, a sense of impending ill, a dull pervading of calamity already accomplished or to be met,— something they could not understand and never discussed — marked the ending of the first act in their life drama.

Transplanted suddenly in the Kansas Territory, with

the frontier so unlike anything they had ever known, their trouble-free Southern spirit, combined with the thrill and vigor of the West, and their unbounded faith in their father, made the second act more interesting than the first for them. For they were young, and adventure and hope and keen intelligence drew them quickly from any homesick longing. Unconsciously they were for the first time beginning to live their own independent lives, to think for themselves and act on their own judgment. The frontier exacted this much from all who crossed her borders. The day just opening was to make them for the first time conscious of this change in themselves.

Boniface Penwin combined an explosive impulsiveness with bland self-control, and he could not tell when either would be master of him, except where his family was concerned. There he had always held self-mastery. It came as a thunderbolt this morning, then, when he suddenly declared:

"Children, there will soon be a dozen families from Georgia and as many from South Carolina settling round us. I want you to let the Darrows and the Lamonds alone from this time. You hear?"

The question was thundered out in a tone the children had never heard him use to them before. The command had followed the chatter of Lucy and Tarleton, who were rehearsing the doings of the day before in the woods.

"I mean just what I say, and you must understand it. Every day is bringing us nearer to a settlement of things in this Territory, and we must be ready without being tangled up with anybody. There is no knowing what may happen here."

He rose and hurried from the room. A few minutes later they saw him ride furiously away on the red roan horse of his recent barter.

"You will remember what your father has said," Aunt Crystal warned them gently, and having given the admonition she went to her household duties.

The children looked at one another silently. A great gulf seemed to open suddenly before them. Through the half-open door the sharp autumn wind blew across the room. It set the young blood a-tingle with its snappy breath.

"Will you remember, Lucy?" queried Craig.

"Will you?" she returned.

"And will you, Tarley?" Craig turned to his little brother.

"No, I will *not*," Tarleton answered, defiantly, and Craig offered no reproof.

"I can let the Darrows alone," he said.

"I'll stick to Joe," Tarley declared, stoutly.

"I'm not going to give up anybody, Beth nor Elliot nor Joe — nor Mark," and pretty Lucy's eyes flashed with something of her father's spirit. "What ails papa, I wonder. He looked awfully mad."

Craig recalled the scene in the wood, and his heart was heavy. He was only an untried boy himself, but a boy with a dawning sense of personal demands and duties.

"Lucy and Tarley, do you know what you are saying?" he asked. "There is something back of this or papa would n't have said it."

"I wish we had never come from Georgia." Lucy's eyes were swimming in tears and Tarleton sniffled a little homesick sniffle.

"Do you want to go back now?" Craig questioned.

"No, sir." Tarley braced up.

"Not now. It would n't be quite the same now, would it?" and Lucy also caught the spirit.

"What was it that man said yesterday about trouble,

Lucy? It seems to be getting here. Let's wait and see what happens. Papa may change his mind. Nasty day out. Lucy, go help Aunt Crystal. Tarley, we've got to cut up that wood some nigger ought to be cutting for us."

The children separated for the morning, unconscious that for the first time in their lives each was thinking and choosing independently.

By noon the drizzle was a rain. By mid-afternoon it was a steady downpour, and the darkness of evening came early, even for October. Beth Lamond sat alone by the stone fireplace in the little living-room. She had laid aside her work and was gazing into the heart of the red coals. Her golden hair drooped about her face, and called to contrast the warm, dark-red dress with the little white band of collar about her throat.

All day her mind had held only one thing: the fairy-land of moonlight, the gentle spell of companionship, the well-built frame and handsome face and deep voice of Elliot Darrow, the sudden dimness, the silvery pointed shadows — and then — her soul rebelled at further thought. And yet, unbidden, the picture repeated itself to the same vanishing point, was destroyed and built up again. And underneath it all, deep hidden, was a happiness, that she did not want to give up. A sacred possession, hers and hers alone.

A knock at the door startled her. It might be Elliot. How could she meet him? Then a foolish fear seized her. She had never been afraid before, but now she was alone and in a lonely place. She half hoped it might be Elliot. The knock sounded again, gentle but insistent. Beth laughed at her fear of such a knock, and, still smiling, opened the door. Craig Penwin, with garments dripping, stood outside in the cold gloom. With the warm firelight for a background, Beth seemed to him an ideal

home spirit smiling a welcome. "Golden-haired women ought always to wear red on dark, rainy nights," was what the young man thought. What he said was only to inquire:

"Are you alone?"

"Yes," Beth said. "Mother and father have gone over to Wren's, the settlers who built that cabin by the edge of the ravine last August. He had an accident this morning, and just by chance we got the word in time to help them. He's a daring little Yankee. This is the second time he's been hurt in two months."

"Too bad!" Craig said, and then lapsed into silence.

"What's the matter, Craig?" Beth asked suddenly. "Are you changing, too,—with the weather, or old age?"

Craig iooked up quickly. Why need a girl, a fair-faced girl with a red dress and golden hair, be so provokingly sweet and comfortable looking when the firelight is warm and all outside is chill and dripping wet?

Beth's eyes were bright and full of hope; and—hearts were young and companionship dear.

"Beth, I came over to tell you something," Craig began bravely. "Something my father said this morning,"—he hesitated and Beth looked up with eager interest. Craig was worth looking at just then, for he was at his best self.

"You know, you must know, that Georgia and Pennsylvania are very far apart, and men bred in them cannot think alike, especially about slave-holding and all that."

"Oh, yes, I know," and Beth smiled. "I think I know, Craig, just exactly what your father said, because he's just about as set in his views as my blessed old papa, and when you say 'as set as a Scotchman,' you've said the

last word on 'setness.' Colonel Penwin said he had n't any use for David Lamond's foolish sentiments, would n't stand for them, wished no more of his kind would ever cross the border into Kansas. I know the whole thing. Don't tell me any more. It does n't affect us, does it?"

"But, Beth, there 's more I want to say—"

"No there is n't," Beth interrupted. "Your father is an awfully fine-looking man."

"Hm-m!" Craig made a mock courtesy.

"Oh, Tarley looks just like him; you don't, and you 're not like him, either, now are you?"

Her deep gray eyes held him, and with a half-serious, half-joking tone she went on.

"Really, Craig, Georgia and Pennsylvania may be far apart, but can't the lines run from them straight to Kansas and meet here. I had a little geometry in the academy last winter."

"No, they will never meet here. Not from those starting points," Craig said, gravely.

"Well, let them run parallel. It will save a fuss, maybe, and it does n't concern us. Mother says we children must not be anything, nor from anywhere but just here."

"You don't know father, Beth."

"Well, I don't want to, if he is like Daddy Lamond. Let 's talk about something else," and Beth settled down by the fireside with a serene face. "I 'm glad you came this evening, for I was lonely, and—for something else, too."

"What else?" Craig did not look at her at all.

"Oh, because I wanted to see you. Can't I want to see you? Boys and girls are n't so common on these lonely prairies. I 'd be glad to see—just anybody, sometimes."

"Even me," Craig suggested.

"Yes, even you. And then you are really interesting, up to things, you know. You keep me guessing."

"Well, guess what I want to say now!"

It was a dangerous question for the young man, for now he turned and looked straight into the eyes of the girl. A blush swept her fair cheek, and, hastily pushing back the curly tresses from her forehead, she hesitated a moment.

"Oh, you guess who was here last night. You never could, I know." She was thinking of the Indian.

"I know without guessing." Craig's lips stiffened. "It was Elliot Darrow."

"How do you know? I was n't thinking of him," Beth cried.

"He told me so himself."

Craig wished he could have understood the expression of Beth's face at that moment.

A sense of loss, the slipping away of some sacred thing, the common cheapness of what had been to her a dear, priceless possession, revealed to the girl with cruel suddenness how much in one short day she had enshrined the memory of the night before. Perhaps girls have more self-control than the young men who study them. Beth sat half smiling, looking into the fire. It was only that Craig's quick eye had caught the strange, fleeting expression, — he could not have said what it meant.

"What else did Elliot say?" she asked.

"He said I 'd be just as well off not to know what he had been up to, but he did n't mind telling me. He also said he thought he had staid too long. I would n't have said that, Beth, if I had been here instead of Elliot."

How could the girl know that Craig was thinking only of himself; of his father's command and passionate anger; of his own dread of whatever might have befallen to so

disturb that father to make him wander in the woods at midnight and groan in very agony of soul. And all the while before him was this sweet-browed girl, grown suddenly so different to him from the Beth Lamond of all the Kansas summer time, ending now in this cold, dreary rain. The day had been ages long, and had brought such a change with its hours; small wonder that he gave little thought just now to the young man between himself and whom there had never been the basis of a lasting friendship. He could have dropped Elliot Darrow out of his life anywhere without feeling the loss. Not so this friendship for a winsome, jolly girl-companion. Oh, the day was very different from any his life had ever known.

A step on the stone porch floor, a knocking, and Elliot Darrow faced Beth at the open door.

"I—I beg your pardon. Your mother wanted me to stop on the way home and tell you she will stay all night at Wren's. Your father will be here soon."

Elliot had meant to say something more. He had expected to find Beth alone, and he meant to tell her frankly how miserable his act of the night before had made him; had meant to ask her forgiveness and to assure her he was not the rude fellow she must think him to be. The nearer he came to the Lamond home the happier he grew, with the consciousness of his good purpose, with hope whispering her own secrets in his ear.

Craig Penwin, standing by the fireside, saw Beth's hand tremble on the latch and noted Elliot's white face, from which the color had swept back.

"I am much obliged to you. Will you come in?" Beth managed to say. Her heart was full of shame and anger as she recalled Craig's report of what Elliot had said, and she spoke coldly.

"No, you have company. You will not need me. Good-night." He spoke in low tone, which Craig could not catch, and passed quickly out into the dark and wet.

At that moment Craig Penwin knew the bitterest stab that comes to the heart of youth, the stab of jealousy.

"So he won't come in. I can give him up, all right, but I've got to get home now. Some other day must settle things for me," so Craig thought as he took up his hat.

"Must you go, too, Craig?" There was a hint of pleading in the girl's tone, for she did not want to be alone just then.

"I must, Elizabeth," Craig spoke, playfully, but there was a soft light in his deep, blue eyes. "Some other time I'll tell you what father said. This has been the strangest day I ever knew. No other day will ever be quite like it for me."

"Nor for me," Beth said, sadly, and neither one understood the other.

CHAPTER VI

PILGRIM SONS

We ourselves must Pilgrims be,
Launch our Mayflower and steer boldly
Through the desperate winter sea.
— James Russell Lowell.

COKE WREN, the settler who had built a cabin on the edge of the ravine in August, and had had two accidents since his coming to the West, was not the kind of man to be disturbed by accidents. Coke was a wiry little Yankee from Massachusetts, who with his equally wiry little wife, Patty Wren, had come to the West as easily as the wild geese fly southward. There were no little Wrens in their nest, and the pair could have roosted, if it had been necessary, in their getting settled in Kansas. In fact, they had already done this for the larger part of one night before they were finally domiciled on the edge of the ravine. They had built their first home down in the heart of the hollow, with the Yankee notion of the need for such shelter in the Kansas winters as the New England winters require. And one night the June rains had filled all the draws and swept down the ravine, with a cloudburst helping to do things. The little Wrens' nest went to pieces, and whatever may have gotten by the Hole in the Rock went gaily on through the Wakarusa to the Kaw, landing at last at some sand-bar, or swept even to the big muddy Missouri, doing its own annual business of destruction just then.

The two Wrens, as Coke afterward declared, "flew the coop" just in time to reach some trees, where they staid until the waters receded and the morning rainbow cut the blackness of the eastern sky. Patty declared that Coke had crowed at daybreak that morning, he felt so much at home in the thorny locust, whither they had sought refuge in that midnight flood. At any rate, the Wrens were ready to take whatever came, and it was their sense of humor and upbubbling cheer that broke up more than one neighborhood feud in the years that followed, and kept homesick, lonely families anchored in the West until they had no wish to leave it any more.

That spirit of daring was what had caused Coke's second accident, when he tried to force his fiery little horse down a steep, slippery path in the ravine to find what it was that had so frightened the beast and made it rear backward. The result was just the usual outcome of such a feat. Coke was laid up for days — against his own judgment, of course, because he had a strong reason for wanting to go to Lawrence, a reason he revealed only to Patty.

There was no physician nearer than Dr. Robinson, in Lawrence, and he had gone to the Topeka convention, forbidding Wren to step on his wrenched ankle.

"I want to know," Wren said, with his down-East drəwl, "does Doc Robinson think I'd want to step on it, or have anybody else do it, either? No more do I want a doctor settin' on my head, tellin' me where I can go and what I das or dassent do." Coke said "dew" for "do," with other pronounced Yankeeisms.

"Now, Cokey, don't be obstinit," Patty said, soothingly, her bright, black eyes twinkling and her little, beak-like face hiding a merry grin. "The doctor may

put hobbles on ye and turn ye loose on the perairie if you dew.'

Coke giggled, but made up his mind not to obey the order just the same. In fact, he was feverish to get about on another account. Contrary to command, he staid at home only so long as he himself deemed necessary, and then rode the same fiery pony which had so recently thrown him, away down the Trail, and on to the little village of Lawrence. Dr. Robinson came down the main street just in time to see his patient tying his horse before Winthrop Merriford's door. Shaking his fist at his physician, he walked without a limp into Merriford's house.

"You can't kill a Yankee," the doctor said to himself, "least of all a little, boneless breed of Yankee like those Wrens. Their muscles are just strung on rubber cord and they are wired together through their nerve cavities. Wren and his wife in one basket would n't weigh a hundred and seventy-five pounds, but he may outlast a man like Merriford or Lamond."

The name and fame of Lawrence in that time was bigger in Massachusetts and other New England States than it was in Kansas, and the sturdy little village was mainly a thing of promise. A few comfortable homes, according to frontier ideas of comfort, were surrounded by all grades of habitations downward to the mere tent.

And yet the lack of things was the poverty of the beginnings of the struggle, not the degradation of pauperism at the end of it. And with all was democratic goodfellowship and a freedom from conventional bonds. Everybody knew the limitations of the West and everybody knew these limitations were no bar to what the turn of the years might bring; that good fortune might

be to-morrow the endowment of the poorest of to-day, if his heart was stout and his hand willing.

Among the best of the Lawrence homes in the middle '50's was that of Winthrop Merriford, lawyer, abolitionist, statesman, gentleman. New England soil grew no finer man, nor did this young Kansas Territory hold a citizen of broader grasp and clearer view. From the day of his coming to the West he held his own place in the affairs of the young commonwealth.

The steamer that had followed the one bringing Winthrop Merriford up the Missouri River had brought Coke Wren, who looked upon Merriford as the biggest asset a State could possess. He had known the lawyer from his own boyhood, and would have accounted no sacrifice too great to show his respect for his friend.

As he walked into the open hall door of the Merriford home on this day, he came plump into Jupe, the refugee negro.

"Why, hello, where the Old Scratch did you come from? Are you yourself or are you not? I want to know, now."

Jupe's white teeth fairly flashed, as he towered above the little Yankee.

"You're Mars'r Wren, from old Massachusetts, now ain't you?" he beamed with pleasure.

"Yes, that's me; but who are you? Not that runaway nigger, Jupe, who got up to Boston, are you?"

"I shore is," Jupe replied. "Come in here." He led the way into the parlor. "Set down, Mars'r Wren, set down. Seems like I must talk to you a little while."

"All right, Jupiter, but I want to see Merriford first. I'm in a hurry to see him; important business, you know." Wren seated himself and the negro stood leaning against the mantel facing him. "Never mind 'bout

Mars'r Merriford. He an' Mis' Merriford an' the little gals, Annie an' Nellie, all done gone to Leavenworf, an' won't be back till late this evenin'. An' Mars'r Wren, I jest must talk to somebody or I'll bust." Jupe grinned broadly.

"I want to know! Well, talk to me, then. Don't want no more busted citizens in Kansas. We are all poor enough now." And then Coke Wren grew serious. "Say, Jupe, you are the darkey that got up to Boston the year Neil Merriford graduated at Harvard, are n't you?"

Jupe gave a great sigh that was almost a sob, and, rising, he went to each of the two windows as if to make sure no one was looking in.

"Don't feel bad nor afraid, Jupe; Lawrence is too full of New England folks, regular old codfish-eatin' down-Easterners, for you to be 'fraid of the Fugitive Slave Law any more. S'pose you just save me any questions and tell me all you want to? Suffering snakes! but it do look good to see anything that reminds me of Neil Merriford. Lord bless him. He 'll be comin' to Kansas soon, I hope."

The negro dropped into a chair.

"Say, Mars'r Wren, lemme tell you all something. I ain't a slave to no man with my hands no more. I hires to Mars' Merriford, an' he done pays me ef I 'm worthy of my hire. But, Mars' Wren, a man may be white as heaven in his skin, an' be the biggest slave on God's earth, he may.

"I is a free man of my master, down Souf," Jupe went on, "but 'long as I 'm so — ignorant" — he struggled with that word — "jest so long I is a slave. But I is learnin', and when I git learnin' all done, then ——" He stood up to his full height, six feet and three inches, with the muscles of a giant and the face of a child.

"I reckon you 'll make it through, all right, if you forgit the darkey trick of stealin', and tend to your knittin' careful. Was this what you had to tell?"

"I ain't near done yet," Jupe said, seating himself opposite the little Yankee. "I is only beginnin', but I want you all to know first I ain't yet out of slavery till I get furder in my knowledge. Mars' Wren, I done run out of the Souf to Boston. You 'member how the old overseer chase after me till he git clear to Boston — Mars'r Neil Merriford jest gittin' out of college that year? It was June — roses time, an' Mars'r done fall in love with a pretty miss — a girl from down Souf, what was up in Boston learnin' music. Maybe I ought n't say it," Jupe hesitated, "but I never see no girls up Norf quite so sweet and pretty as them pretty ladies down Souf, real, soft-voiced lady-birds, graceful an' sweet."

"Just like Patty, she 's graceful as a hen. Yes, go on," Wren observed.

"Mars'r Neil awfully in love with this fine lady. When I git to Boston I was nigh dead, and Neil Merriford done stop right with that pretty girl — done stop that night I get there to his father's door — and go back in his house and tell his step-mother, little Miss Nellie and Annie's mother, to give poor runaway darkey a good supper."

"Yes, I heard something about that. The overseer pretty near got you, did n't he?" Wren asked.

"I was 'twix' two fires, the debbil and the deep-sea fires, shore. I know Mars'r Neil's girl — and she know me, down Souf — and I did 'nt want to stay round where Mars'r Neil was. And that overseer come chasin' hisself clear to Boston, and I did n't know where to go."

"Where did you go?" asked Wren.

"Down to the river-side, meanin' to jump in ef I got too close pressed."

"So that's how it happened that when Neil's boat got upset and he had saved the girl's life, and was about to go down himself, you jumped in and fished him out. And then Neil faced that overseer next day, and dared him to touch you, and he had to go back without you. And so you knew Neil's girl, did you? Well, how did the whole rumpus come out? I heard Neil had some trouble, but I was up in Maine gettin' rid of some old dornicks and a little sand they call a farm, so's I could come West, and I lost track. Did you come West from Massachusetts?"

"No, sah!" The negro's face was a study. "I went Souf again after that."

"What for, Jupe?"

"For my wife. But"—in a lowered tone and slowly —"she is dead now." The man's voice was full of pathos, and the grief of his countenance was pitiful to see.

"And so you came West. I reckon you done well by it," Wren said.

"Yes, we come West—I mean I did, 'cause she's dead. Lemme tell you, Mars'r Wren, 'fore God, I got a work to do yit, but I ain't out of the house of bondage, not yit."

"Oh, you are safe enough, I tell you. In a hand-to-hand fight you're a match for a dozen, anyhow, and Lawrence will give you a good home if you behave yourself. There's a warm heart in this little town. The children of the Pilgrim Fathers is here, and they know what rings sound and what is worthless. They measure men more by the Golden Rule than a golden ruler: When ye git down to real brass tacks, ye can trust old New England men every time."

"I knows it. Ain't I with Mars'r Merriford? But I ain't free up here yit." He tapped his forehead.

"Oh, I understand. Well, keep your eyes open, and, for the Lord's sake, don't do too much talkin', and you can learn. Land o' nutmegs! You can learn. These peraries is a open spellin'-book, and there 's a right good gospel runnin' down the Wakarusa every day. You don't need to be white to read the handwritin' of God Almighty. You 'll git your whole freedom quick enough, if you just put your best licks at it. When 's Merriford to get back, did you say?"

"To-night — maybe sooner," Jupe answered, absently.

"Where 's Neil now? Will he be comin' here soon, do you suppose?" Wren questioned.

Jupe turned his back on the little Yankee, and, staring out of the window, he answered, slowly:

"You better wait till Mars'r Merriford gits here, and ask him."

Coke Wren did not have long to wait before Winthrop Merriford and his family came.

"Hello, Coke," the lawyer called, cheerily. "Does a man good to see you. I thought you were tied to the bedpost at home. Dr. Robinson said you would n't be out for two weeks."

"And lied, as is his professional duty. We could be seedin' down our graveyards with early potatoes if there was a few less doctors runnin' at large."

"You are hard on them, Coke — a man that 's always getting broken up like you are, too. You ought to be glad there 's somebody willing to gather up your members and wire you together again."

They were standing by the stable door while Jupe was taking care of the horses.

"Come, Wren, let's go in. I've had a long ride in this sharp air," Merriford said.

"Can I see you by yourself?" Wren asked. "I've got something to tell you."

"Come into the office. Mrs. Merriford and the girls will be busy in the house, and we will not be interrupted. Jupe, go in and help Mrs. Merriford, when you get through."

"You won't need me in the office, will you, sir?" queried Jupe, with a longing look.

"No, not now. Hurry along lively." And the two men went inside the little building that was just then the biggest law office in Lawrence.

"Merriford, I'll be quick," Coke Wren began. "I've been two weeks keepin' still, except to Patty. The day I was hurt I was down in the ravine and my horse got so almighty scared at somethin', I could n't understand what. So I tried to git back by a short-cut to the same place. And what in the dickens do you reckon I found? It was in gittin' away from it that my horse slipped."

Merriford shook his head.

"Well, I come square on the bay colt that Colonel Boniface Penwin traded for that roan horse he's carvin' up the perarie with these days. The colt was dead, with a bullet hole in its chest. Here's the bullet. I cut it out. I left the hole, not needin' it for purposes of identification."

Coke handed the lawyer a bullet as he said this. Merriford examined it carefully, and then, carefully wrapping it up, locked it in a drawer in his desk.

"You mean for me to keep it?" he asked.

Coke nodded. "Of course; I brought it to you. But Merriford, there's something wrong."

"Yes, there's much that is wrong." Merriford medi-

tated before he went on. "Why did Jupe want to come in here instead of going into the house, do you suppose?"

"I don't pretend to know why a nigger wants to do anything. Do you think the nigger knows?" the little man returned.

"Yes, Jupe knows what he is about every minute. He knows something he won't tell, or doesn't dare tell me. I'm biding my time. Mark me, Coke Wren, when we find out who sent that bullet, and when and why it was sent, we'll find Jupe knows it, too."

"I want to know! Do you trust him, Merriford? I don't want the race to be slaves, and I don't want to be slaves to 'em, neither." Coke gave his comical face a twist.

"I trust this man as I would trust you," Merriford replied. "But he doesn't trust me—yet. He will. I can wait."

"Well, I must be goin', or some son of Belial will be puttin' a bullet into my horse down in that same ravine," Wren said, rising.

"Are you afraid, Coke?" Merriford asked.

"Not of the devil himself," the Yankee declared. "By the way," he added, "what do you hear from your boy, Neil, Merriford?"

The lawyer's face clouded. It was a good, strong face, with a firm mouth, kind eyes, and thoughtful brow.

"Wren, you know he went South, expecting to settle up affairs and take his bride home with him. I had hoped later they would decide to come on West. Neil is a fine boy, Coke, if he is my son, and the girl he is to marry will get acclimated to the North all right. She and Neil are very fond of each other, more so than most young lovers are. He wrote me one letter, a short one,

saying he found things in bad shape. Didn't specify anything. He is back in Boston by this time. I expect a letter from him by every mail. And yet mails are slow, and if the boy has had to put off his wedding, I expect he's pretty blue, and doesn't feel like writing. I am hoping all will be well for him. I'd get pretty much concerned if things weren't keeping us all on the jump here in Kansas. My hands are full of my own affairs. I don't know how I'd get along without my little girls and their mother to give me something comforting to think about. Neil had much of the loss of his own mother made up to him in the love of his step-mother. Nothing like a home to anchor a man, is there, Coke? We need these home-anchors here, too, for the Battle of the Lord is going to be fought out here soon, and we must help to fight it."

"That's what Patty and me said the rainy night we roosted in the thorny locust. We said we could make a home with each other. We didn't have to have that house, for it was too flimsy to stay over our heads and hold us, and we were stronger than it was. We just carried our home in our two hearts and flew up into that snarly ornery locust tree like a couple of bantams, and turned our oiled feathers to the rain, so to speak. We didn't come to Kansas to git scared out by trifles. We are here to make this a Free-Soil State, by gum!"

"You are a blamed good fellow, Coke Wren. Kansas will win to a Free-State land if half its settlers have your pluck. Good-by."

When his visitor was gone, Winthrop Merriford unlocked his drawer and took out the bullet he had placed therein, and examined it long and carefully. He even took it to the window, and with a magnifying glass studied it painfully. In his absorption he did not notice

at first that Jupe was standing by the window on the outside, looking as intently at him as he was looking at the bullet. He took care that the black man should see the careless gesture by which he seemed to throw the bit of lead into the ash pan by the stove, and then carefully lock some papers in his desk.

"I'd give much if I had the pistol that sent that bullet." He sighed deeply. "I wonder how long Jupe has been out there, and if he heard anything. Hardly could have done that, though. I saw to that when this little shack was built. I'll wait awhile and the fellow will come to me. I won't need to follow him around."

Wren reached the ravine on his homeward journey at twilight. He always rode like the wind, but, remembering his recent fall on the steep path up-stream, he reined in his horse on the slippery Trail, and passed gently down the way to the crossing. Where the shadows were thickest by the Hole in the Rock, his keen eyes caught sight of a man on horseback, staring at the still, black pool. So absorbed was the lone watcher there, that he did not note Wren's approach until the pony's feet struck the water of the crossing. Then he started violently, and, wheeling his horse, he dashed up the farther side of the hollow like a very fury.

"Well, Gosh Almighty! What was Colonel Boniface Penwin doin', settin' there in the dark? That roan of his'n was a good trade, all right. It can go like an Injun's horse, sure as the world. The idea of a man like Penwin, weighin' two hundred, runnin' from a stringy little shoat like me, that's got to git my conscience weighin' heavy 'fore I can ever tip ninety-nine pound. I'm thankful right now to the Good Bein' that I don't have to run from nobody on the Lord's footstool, and I ain't never goin' to, neither. I'd ruther be dead all

my life than be a livin' disgrace to myself, jest despisin' the man I was packin' round with me ever' day." And Coke Wren, happy at heart, hurried to his little Wren's nest on the edge of the ravine, a mile away.

CHAPTER VII

A PROPHECY

As long as Nature shall not grow old,
Nor drop her work from her doting hold;
And her care for the Indian comfort,
And the yellow rows in pairs to set;
So long shall Christians here be born,
Grow up and ripen as God's sweet corn!
— John Greenleaf Whittier.

THE last real Indian summer day of that Autumn fell on a Sabbath following a week of chilly, gray skies, bitter morning air, and frost in the lowlands. All these were swept out of mind by the sunburst of the glorious dawn of a holy day, in whose sweet hours the heavens were arched above the earth, like an amethyst dome, tinted about its low rim with topaz and mother-of-pearl; while shimmering prairie and wooded headland and winding waters, in deep, purple vales, smiled back at the skies above them. Beneath the cottonwood trees the ground was golden with fallen leaves. The edge of the ravine was all scarlet with sumac, blending through duller tones to the richness of the oak brush and the dark green of the scrub cedar in the hollow. The bitter-sweet bushes hung with coral beads, and the deep pink of the straggling squawberry brightened the bronze-brown of the upland. In the far distance a wreath of heliotrope haze hung between heaven and earth, as if the hand of Omnipotent Beauty would lay upon the brow of Nature its crowning gift to the year's best days.

Across the land flowed the caressing breeze of the open west, exhilarating as wine, gentle as peace, buoyant as hope.

Truly, the earth was doing her best on this Sabbath day to bear from the Infinite a beneficent token of gladness to the sons and daughters of men. And if there was sadness, or unrest, or dread on this rare day, they came not from without, but from within the hearts of men. And there was sadness, and unrest, and dread, in the minds of the settlers of the plains in this late autumn time.

Eighteen months had passed since the Kansas Territory had been opened for settlement, with the national provision that the majority should rule. Beyond question, even in eighteen months the number of Free-State men who had become citizens of the new Territory greatly exceeded the number of those who would make it a land of slavery. True there were here, as everywhere, double-dealing, unprincipled men, who serve the devil in the name of the Lord, whose acts brought shame upon a noble cause. And there were also Southern sympathizers who from first to last were honorable, law-abiding citizens. But clear of both of these, the home-builders of the young commonwealth were already proving the trend of the majority, needing only the faithfulness of the National Government to its own statute and the protection of their rights as citizens at home to settle the issue in a peaceful ballot-box.

Yet in this autumn, neither the power at Washington nor the civil power in the Territory availed to protect this growing little majority. Governor Shannon was both weak-willed and unacquainted with the real people whom he had sworn to serve. Not so the officer chosen by an illegitimate legislature to maintain civil peace. This

man, as postmaster in Missouri, and sheriff of the region round about Lawrence, with the personal qualities of a braggart, a coward, a drunkard, and an assassin, became the efficient servant of the governor and tool of those who knew no law beyond the law of the shotgun and the bowie knife. And all the while, just across the eastern border, ready to rush at the cry of the victim, to be in at the kill, and loot of booty, was the inevitable horde of the rank of social disorder — men of unbridled passions, whose appetites were debauched, whose love was lust, whose brute satiety was reached through squandered human blood.

Small wonder that there should be sadness, and unrest, and dread in the minds of the settlers on this fair Sabbath day. And great the marvel that, with all this threatening of calamity, hearts were stout and voices brave, and eyes looked still unflinchingly westward.

Along the old Santa Fé Trail and up from new-made by-trails, and across the sheer, trackless prairie, on this Sabbath morning came the settlers from far-scattered homes. They threaded in from all directions, their converging paths pointing to the little village of Palmyra, sitting with the pert expectancy of a new frontier town beside the Trail.

A preacher, welcome visitor to the early frontier, a Methodist preacher, it chanced was spending the day in Palmyra. He had come into town on Saturday with a wagon train, going westward on the Trail, bound for Santa Fé. The train had moved on to travel on the Sabbath as well as any other day, but the preacher had staid behind. Word had swept the Vinland Valley like a prairie fire that Saturday afternoon that a sermon could be heard in Palmyra on Sunday. Hence these prairie Pilgrims making for one common shrine in the loneliness

of this autumn day. It mattered not that this preacher called himself a Methodist. Baptist, Presbyterian, Quaker, or Episcopalian, with those who claimed no specific church affiliations, all came hither, hungering not more in truth for the gospel message than they were drawn by a homesick longing for the Sabbath of a civilized land.

"Mother, my stone-bruise hurts my shoe. I wish I could go barefoot in winter, too," little Joe Darrow said, trudging along with his mother, behind his father and Mark, on their way to Palmyra.

"Better stick to thy copper-toes, Joey," Mark looked back to advise. "If there was only one rock in Kansas, thee would be sure to stump thy bare feet against it. Whew, look behind you!" This to Elliot, who brought up the rear.

The Darrow family all turned at Mark's words, to find the Lamonds rounding a curve in the Trail behind them.

Elliot had not seen Beth since the night he left her with Craig Penwin, and he had told himself often enough to have convinced anybody else that he was overcoming the dreariness that five minutes spent at Lamond's door had managed to crowd into his days. True, he had been able to see only one picture in these weeks — the picture of a fair-faced girl in a dark-red dress. A sweet picture, only the face had no welcome in it for him, and the courtesy of greeting had been a mere form. And in the background of all of this sat Craig Penwin, whom also Elliot had not seen since that night.

The Lamonds fell in with their neighbors by natural selection, Mr. Lamond beside Hiram Darrow and his wife with Isabel. Joe and Mark shot on ahead together, leaving Beth and Elliot to do the best they could for each other. The conversation was not general. The boys discussed the rules of the game in "shinney." The

men were earnest over problems of state, while their wives considered the best ways of keeping house in the coming Winter with the conveniences of the frontier. Only the two behind all the others found it difficult to talk.

"It has been a rough week. How quickly it has changed!" Beth ventured.

"Yes, this is a strange country," Elliot answered, a little stiffly, "but it is a beautiful land, is n't it?"

They were at the top of one of those prairie billows wherefrom the earth, and the fulness thereof, unfolds to the view with a beauty so intense that to the artistic spirit the joy of it is close to pain. The wooing sweetness of the autumn day caught them in its spell and drove from them with one caress of its soft air what hours of explanation might only have bungled in attempting. All the severe manners and guarded speech each had planned to use when they should meet deserted them in the surprise of the pleasure of being together again. They had fallen behind the others, and the world, their world, because they were young and made worlds easily, had no flaws in the making.

"Why does father always call this kind of a day a 'weather-breeder,' I wonder," Beth said, with the joy of the morning dancing in her dark, gray eyes. "Is n't every day a 'weather-breeder'?"

"Oh, yes!" Elliot's pulse was on the up-grade, too. "But nobody ever thinks of that, only in the sunshiny hours. Why should n't we say on dark, rainy nights, 'Oh, this is a "weather-breeder"! To-morrow will be fine again'?"

And then the thought of one dark, rainy night came to both, and what Beth saw in Elliot Darrow's eyes made her turn quickly from him. But not so quickly that

something, that marvelous something that even wise Solomon said was among the quartette of things too wonderful for him, had made the young man's heart give a great bound, and he dared not say another word along this line.

"I think, Beth, the days now are all, in a way, trouble-breeders," he said, after a pause. "Father was over at Palmyra when that wagon train went through yesterday. They didn't have very cheerful news to bring of the conditions over the border. Everybody is looking for something to happen soon. But when it does"—Elliot's winning smile could have swayed a doubting soul to trust him—"when it does come, will be the time to say, 'Oh, this is a forerunner of better things.' At least, that's what mother says. And if I were an artist and wanted to paint a picture of Hope, I'd paint Hiram Darrow's wife."

"You would be painting a beautiful woman," Beth said, softly, and then she added: "This will be a hard winter, of course. So many settlers are not ready yet to have cold weather come; so many poor houses and such a lack of food, and no doctor for the sick, nor preachers for the dying."

"And with these," Elliot went on, "is the danger to human life, the lawlessness of the pro-slavery men; and Governor Shannon weakly giving up to those who count any crime done for their cause an act of bravery. Oh, well, we'd better not talk about it, or we'll be 'trouble-breeders.' You may get the chance to go to war yet, Beth."

"Oh, I'll send you and Coke Wren, if there's enough of him left by that time," Beth answered, lightly.

They were near to the village now, approaching the newest little cabin that had straggled out beyond the

westward edge of the settlement, as if hunting aimlessly for some geometric pattern in the town site into which it could fit; and, finding none, had dropped down to hide in the tall grass like a chicken when the mother hen cries the warning for a hawk. A few minutes before Joe and Mark had met the owner of this cabin, a young Southerner, as he was coming from town, and persuaded him to turn back and go with them to the preaching.

Beth and Elliot paused awhile and turned to look back over the way they had come. Its beauty spread away to the westward like a dream of fair lands.

"Oh, Beth, it is worth it all, this wonderful country, and the wonderful men and women who dare to come here. The very winds that sweep across it deny that it shall ever be a Slave State, and when I listen to your father and mine, and when I think of all that that man, John Brown, said at our house the night after we went nutting"—Elliot's voice failed a little here—"and when I think of Coke Wren and Patty, I know I am glad to be here."

"I am glad, too," the girl declared. "Mother says I am intended for the West."

How like a part of all of it she seemed just then! Fearless, happy, hopeful—a girl to adorn the land she called home.

It did not seem the time just then for Elliot to say what he had meant to say on the night he had found Beth and Craig together. He was longing to set himself right with her, but she seemed so different to-day. Maybe she knew by instinct how truly ashamed of himself he was. His mother often understood him without a word. Might not Beth understand a little, too? At any rate, he would wait until after the church service, and he would have more time in a long homeward walk

to get rid of this load. Just now it was so good to be near her, to hear her speak and see her smile. Brave-hearted, sunshiny, companionable, her mother was right, she fitted the West.

The trail from Penwin's came into the Santa Fé Trail around a smooth, low knoll, at whose base were a few scrubby wild plum bushes. Lucy and Craig had just rounded the knoll to enter the main highway. Lucy had not been away from home nor seen a soul except the Penwin family since the day in the woods. Although the two at the top of the slope were too far away to be recognized by either herself or her brother, the sight of a woman's dress made impulsive Lucy cry out with joy, and she involuntarily waved her hand to Beth. Craig, who was ahead, heard Lucy's happy little whoop, and looked up just in time to catch Beth's answering signal. He lifted his hand in courteous response, for the plum bushes hid his sister at the instant, and he took the action as a mere token of greeting to himself.

At the top of the slope Elliot had turned just in time to see Beth's motion and Craig's answering signal. He did not see Lucy by the plum bushes at all. It was a small thing, but Elliot was only a boy in the impulses of his first love, not a man with mature judgment. The rainy evening at the Lamond home came like a flash, and Beth's cool manner when Craig was near. A little thrust of jealousy stung him as he looked keenly at Beth.

"Somebody waved me a grand good-morning," she spoke, with happy indifference.

"Who was it?" asked Elliot.

"I don't know," answered the girl, truthfully, for she had not recognized the Penwins any more than they had recognized her.

Elliot shut his lips tightly as if that ready winning smile could never play about such a stern, firm mouth again. He forgot that he had been able to tell a red roan horse from a black one, when at the same distance neither Craig nor Beth could distinguish black from white. His gift of keen eyesight was one of the many things he had yet to learn about himself. With his pang of jealousy was his surprise that Beth should try to deceive him in such a small thing. Why should she care that he had seen her send a friendly salute to any young man? It was not the act, the poor boy told himself, but her effort to conceal it that hurt him.

"Shall we go on?" he asked, in a voice so different that Beth turned quickly at the question.

"No, let's wait and see who it is," she said, in a bewildered way.

Beth had tried to forget what Craig had told her of Elliot's speech on the night after his evening with her on the moonlit porch, but now the memory of those careless words came back to her.

"It is Craig and Lucy," Elliot informed her.

Beth started and exclaimed in spite of herself, "Let's go on."

But Elliot answered firmly, "I think we'd better wait now."

They were near the last cabin on the west side of town, the little habitation squatting in the tall grass that came almost to the eaves. It had a small window looking to the west, and a door in the north and another in the south. The doors were closed and no sign of life was visible.

"I suppose these people are ahead at the preaching," Beth ventured to say.

Elliot did not reply. Through the little dark window

his sharp eyes caught sight of a horse's head a few feet from the opening. Craig and Lucy quickened their steps when they recognized the two waiting for them.

Something was wrong for everybody, however, and after the first greetings the four passed almost silently along the Trail to the village settlement. When they were beyond the cabin, the door opened a few inches and the face of Colonel Boniface Penwin peered after them.

"So this is the lawless land where even children defy their parents. I wish to the devil I'd never brought my family out of Georgia, and yet how could I stay there? The curse of poverty! I hate it. But where's my power over my family gone? I told Craig and Lucy not to come here to-day. I suppose they chained Tarley up at home. And I have commanded them to let the Darrows and Lamonds alone! This is how I'm obeyed. It's all the result of those damned abolitionists. I won't dare to make a move to-day."

The cabin door was closed and no sign of life was visible as two horsemen came riding down the Trail. Opposite the little grass-hidden building their horses stopped suddenly. A low, whinnying sound from inside the cabin that caught the hearing of the animals was lost to their riders' ears. It was the call of the roan horse, the same that Elliot had seen a few minutes before. The horsemen passed on to the village. Colonel Penwin waited till they were a safe distance away and then he backed the big roan horse through the rear door of the cabin into the tall grass; and, entering the Trail a little further on, he followed the two men. In his haste he had not noticed little Coke Wren, who had reached the front of the cabin in time to see the whole maneuver.

"I want to know," Wren drawled. "Is B. Penwin goin'

down to worship the Lord or is he followin' those two men? They look like Dow and Branson, from up towards the Wakarusa. And Penwin acts for all the world like a snake wrigglin' out of that tall grass after 'em. They're real Free-State men, too. I reckon I may as well bring up the rear of this doggoned interestin' procession. 'Last of all come Satan,' Shakespeare, or John Milton, or some other Yankee wrote, or maybe it was in the Good Book. Anyhow, I'm 'it' for this parade."

And so they all came into Palmyra. The preaching was in the upper story of the new Palmyra hotel. The stairway was not completed, and the feet of the worshipers stumbled in the ascent. There were no walls as yet to divide the second floor into rooms. The seating was a rude improvisation, nothing in all the appointments suggested the sacred temple for divine service except one thing — the preacher. He stood beside the crazy little table that held his Bible and hymn book, a tall, dark-skinned man, thin, and full of nervous energy. His voice was pitched in an upper key, and his words came swiftly; short, sharp-pointed words, with no effort at eloquence.

The settlers, glad of the opportunity for any Sabbath service, would have listened to any grade of speaker with eagerness. But this man, with words and gestures peculiar to himself, had a strange magnetic presence that held his audience spellbound. His text was that wonderful law of ethics given in the Gospel of John, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." He was not preaching in a quiet little church in some New England or Virginia hamlet, but to men and women on the frontier line of a great conflict, the vanguard of a generation of State builders, and his vision grew clear and his spirit prophetic as the message of the day came

to him. It was his first appearance west of the Missouri River, and his knowledge of the Territory had come from reading and testimony. Now he faced a handful of people who were themselves to do what the Eastern folk had only dreamed should be done. And as he looked at them he trembled under the power of the Word he must speak.

Caught by the magnetism of his voice and unique personality, the company listened first to the old sweet story of the Carpenter of Nazareth, the common man, a day laborer, who went forth against his world of bitterness, and hatred, and oppression, and darker sins; who trod the wine press alone, who was despised and rejected of men, who, at last, in agony of body and deep soul sorrow, climbed his Calvary bearing his heavy cross, giving up his life, his last supremest sacrifice. For what! Not for Himself, nor his family, nor his tribe, nor his nation, but that down through all the cycles of the centuries to be, the whole human race should learn from Him its highest duty and opportunity.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." The preacher whirled the seventeen short words into the very souls of his hearers. "To the martyr comes the crown and the glory, and not to him who 'gleans up his scattered ashes into history's golden urn.' He who fights and wins in what the world would call sometimes a losing game is building, as the Man of Calvary built, a wall of defense for all the people of all the years to follow."

And then the preacher came straight home to those who sat before him.

"You hold to-day a land of beauty and promise. You are here to keep from these grand prairies the foul sin that debauches not only those who father it, but all who

inherit it. The whole world is the worse to-day for the sin of any nation. The whole world is uplifted to-day by the courage of one true man, one noble woman.

"You prairie heroes, you men who have chosen to come hither, called by the voice of God Omnipotent, ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. Enslaved as the most ignorant black brute in man-form who grovels in the ricefields of the South, more animal than man, made animal by man, is that slave whom he must call his master. Stand up as freemen in a free land under the glory of an unstained flag, even the Star-Spangled Banner, and — *do your duty.*"

The preacher paused, and his searching dark eyes seemed to pierce the group and lay bare their souls. It was a wonderful little company, measured by what the years were about to bring to each. The men were gathered together — strong, muscular, coarsely clad, bearded or unshaven, save for two or three; the women in a little cluster about the babies, nearly equalling them in number; and back of these the young people: fresh-cheeked girls, and sturdy boys, tanned, plainly dressed, but with the hope and eagerness of youth in their faces.

As the speaker's eyes took in the crowd, he noted them all — Hiram Darrow, with the clean-cut features of his clean-shaven face; David Lamond, whose strong, manly countenance no man could ignore; Coke Wren, with his beady little eyes cocked at the preacher expectantly and kindly, but managing at the same time to know how everybody else fared about him. Patty had gone down stairs with a fretful baby, giving its frail, inexperienced young mother her first real hour of rest since she had come to Kansas.

"I reckon ef the Lord puts babies here on His moral footstool He means somebody to take care of 'em," Patty

said to herself. "Ef He wants workers in His vineyard, He's likewise got to have somebody to tend the gates an' take care of the babies of that vineyard. Ef I keep this sweet little thing comfortable an' rest its ma, I'm doin' for one of His'n, all right. I'd ruther be a door-keeper er baby-keeper than to dwell in the tents of the Phillisteens." Patty's Scripture was a little mixed, but her heart was straight.

In the center of the group of men sat John Brown, listening eagerly as if the sermon were meant for him alone. About him were four stalwart young men with earnest faces and simple bearing. They were his sons, who had come west with the same dream that had brought so many of that audience across the Missouri River into Kansas — the dream of liberty for all men, free homes on a free soil.

The two horsemen, Dow and Branson, whom Colonel Penwin had followed into Palmyra, sat in the rear of the room beside the Colonel himself, who had come in last of all.

Among the women, no other face was so serenely fair and intelligent as the face of the Quaker woman, Isabel Darrow. Any stranger would have singled her out at once; and if he were a thoughtful person would have noted how superior to the others that fine Madonna face seemed to be. If the same stranger had cast about for those who belonged to her there, he would have singled out Elliot at once as her son.

But no one in all the motley little group had a more sensitive nor more impenetrable countenance than Craig Penwin.

The preacher's keen gaze swept the audience. Then his voice became wonderfully gentle, with a minor chord of pathos that struck the heart strings to like vibrations:

"Men and women of Kansas, my soul is moved to prophetic power. May I not, I who am only a man, but a man chosen this day to speak for my Father, may I not tell to you something of that which reveals itself to me here?"

He paused again, but only for a moment. "I see a beautiful land of sunshine and sweet air, a land of oil, olive, and honey, trampled by the feet of foemen, blackened with the fires of burning homes, stained with human blood.

"I see before me here the men and women, whom the Truth makes free, rise up in God's own might, girded with His strength, to arm the weak and fight for the defenseless. I see the man who shall not look upon another Sabbath day, martyr to the world's great good. I see the man who to-day would have taken his life, but dared not. I see the man clothed in the garments of peace, who shall yet do a great work, and I see a greater man, the greatest of you all, who shall see farthest and clearest the issue of the hour. Black before him will be the way, and slippery with blood the steps up which he must stumble to his own doom. Still greatest is he for that he sees the end from the beginning, aye, sees beyond all these — the every-day common things of common men's lives -- the glory of the light beyond him such that earthly eye can not vision nor heart of man comprehend its beauty. He has known the truth and the truth shall make him free.

"And these young men and women" — the preacher's voice grew tenderer still — "these boys and girls, I see for you the hard straight line of duty, and sacrifice, of loyalty and love, and a glorious victory in days of peace that shall be yours, albeit for some it comes not

this side of the open grave. Ye, too, shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

The little company heard only in a bewildered way the prayer that closed the sermon. They knew it reached to the sublimest heights to which they could lift their souls. Must it not then reach grandly to the Throne of Grace?

Followed then the closing hymn:

God moves in a mysterious way,
  His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
  And rides upon the storm.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
  But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning providence,
  He hides a smiling face.

Mark Darrow, who had listened eagerly to the sermon, took no part in the singing. But in all the little congregation no other voice rose with such sweetness and strength as the voice of his brother, Elliot. Quaker children were not encouraged in singing by their severely disciplined parents in those days, and Elliot's power was a natural gift. He sang by ear and instinct, but the richness of his tones put the last measure of uplift into that strange service.

"Young man, you'll win a battle with that voice of yours some day. Sing loud and clear when that hour comes." The preacher held Elliot's hand long and gazed into his young face.

"I would rather win with song than with bullets," the young man answered, true to his Quaker principles.

"You will have to use both in your battles, my boy — don't be afraid of either."

Elliot turned to see David Lamond's frown of disapproval at his words. Lamond's ideal was a soldier. But this troubled the boy not half so much as the sight of Craig Penwin helping Beth down the uncertain footing of the stairway. When he reached the street, the two were already some distance down the Trail on their homeward way.

Behind him came Lucy Penwin, her eyes full of tears.

"Craig has gone off and left me to go home alone," she said, in a tremulous voice, as she struggled between fear and bravado. She had caught sight of her father, although he had slipped away at the first moment, and her consciousness of her disobedience and her real fear of him, a thing she had never known before, and her new determination to have her own way, were making a sad thing of the day for her. And now Craig had deserted her.

"Never mind Craig, Lucy," Mark Darrow declared over her shoulder. "I've not got much use for brothers myself." He gave Elliot a thump as he passed.

As the young man looked after the four going down the way, a loneliness unlike anything he had ever known robbed that Sabbath day for him of all the sunshine Nature had so richly poured into it.

With the evening, a gray, sullen cloud-bank rose up in the west, and the breeze that had blown balmily all day from the warm south whirled suddenly around to the north, whipping angrily down the land. And that day, with its glorious dawn and sunny noon, went drearily into night — even as the day-dream of glorious deeds and heroic endurance gives place to the stern reality of action.

CHAPTER VIII

THE END OF DREAMS

The harvest fields are whitening in the sun,
The time for idle dreaming now is ended—
The time for earnest faith and work begun.
— Albert W. Macy.

MID-NOVEMBER, and the harvests east of the Missouri River were gathered in. Winter would soon make heavy roads and unfavorable weather for emigrants' wagons or marching ranks. In these clear, sharp days now, prairie paths were firm and plundering easy for an invading force. Often after that fair Sunday morning it was recalled that the preacher had said: "I see one among you who shall not see another Sabbath day." The words then had seemed only like words heard in dreams. Before another Sabbath morning dawned, the news that swept the Vinland Valley proved how true a prophet the preacher had been.

Late in that week Isabel Darrow stood by the doorway, one evening, looking anxiously along the Trail toward Palmyra.

"I wonder what keeps Mark so long," she said. "I told him to hurry home, and now it will soon be dark."

"I'll run up to his Darrarat and see if he is in sight," little Joe offered.

But Elliot, standing behind his mother, said:

"No use to do that, Joe. He's coming yonder. He and Coke Wren on one horse. I saw them on the east ridge a minute ago. They will be in sight again in

another minute, and here in two minutes more. Coke's always hunting a sprained ankle or a broken arm when he rides."

"Thee has wonderful eyesight, Elliot. I did not see them," Mrs. Darrow said.

"'Cept when he's hunting for his own faults. He never sees them," Joe complained. "He teases me something scandulous, Mother, Elliot does."

"Which Joseph likes better than anything else," Elliot declared, picking up the boy and standing him upside-down, on his head.

"Do it again, Ellie," Joe begged.

"I can't now, I must be looking up my own faults, Josiah," Elliot answered, playfully. "Here come the conquering heroes, anyhow."

Coke's little pony fairly tore up the slope to the cabin set among the evergreens.

"Oh, mother, it's awful," Mark cried, as soon as they were within the hearing of those waiting at the door. "That young man Dow, that I sat next to in church Sunday, has been shot down in broad daylight, and killed dead, right on the Trail, by a man that lives over there. And they didn't find him for nearly a half day. Just left him lie there in the road. He wasn't armed at all, and that man slipped up behind him and shot him, all defenceless as he was. Dow was Free-State and his murderer is a Pro-Slavery. He's cut and run for the Shawnee Mission, where Governor Shannon is, so the Governor will protect him, and Sheriff Jones lives at Westport, right across the border, and he can guard him. Everybody in Palmyra is talking about it. Somebody went and burned the old murderer's cabin last night. Wish he had been in it."

"Mark, Mark, don't speak so," Isabel urged. "They

had no right to burn any man's property. Would thee be a murderer, too, like this man?"

"Yes, I would. I'd kill him."

Mark's blood was on fire, so his mother wisely let him explode his forces, and turned to Wren.

"What will come next?" she asked.

"The Good Bein' only knows, and I hope He cares," Wren answered. "Ef He don't we're lost. The man that killed Dow, his own neighbor, will never be brought to trial. There ain't no law in Kansas, nor no governor, nor no sheriff, no federal power, no right, no justice, no protection, no safety, no life. I tell you, Mrs. Darrow, with God Almighty backin' us, we've got to stand up like a wall of men, with strength in ourselves, His strength, not our'n, and be a law unto ourselves, ef we ever git this here land pulled out of hell — excuse me for the word. I mean the one that's in the Good Book, not the cuss word — an' it's about the latitude and longitude we're in right now. But we'll git out, Land o' Nutmegs! We ain't the sons of our sires for nothin'. Tell Darrow for him and Elliot to be ready when the call comes for that. Git up, Cotton Mather. You can't stand here on your lazy legs all night. Good evenin'."

And giving his bridle a twist, the little man was off for his home on the edge of the ravine.

As Coke predicted, no effort was made to punish the man who had done this murderous deed, and the settlements along the whole eastern border were in excitement and anger and dread.

In the Vinland Valley the settlers had much cause for anxiety. Burning the cabin of Dow's murderer had been a rash act, but it gave the enemies of the Free-State people their opportunity, and no man who opposed slavery in Kansas felt that his life or property was safe.

In the dusk of the evening, three days after Mark had brought the news from Palmyra, Isabel Darrow saw a little group of armed horsemen riding swiftly down the Trail from the east. Hiram had gone with Coke Wren to Lawrence to urge some plan of protection for the homes in the Vinland Valley. Isabel did not like the appearance of these armed men, but when they turned aside and dashed up to the front door of the cabin she went fearlessly to meet them. Their air of bravado fell away before her presence. Bullies though they were, they had not any warrant to act here.

"We wanted to ask where Colonel Boniface Penwin lives," Sheriff Jones, the leader, said.

"Thee will have to turn back a mile and take the first trail to the southwest," Isabel said kindly, stepping forward to point out the way. Sheriff Jones lifted his hat to her; but whisky will do much for a bully, and one man so fortified urged his horse past the Sheriff's toward her.

"You are a blamed handsome woman," he said insultingly. "Are you all alone?"

She was not alone. A stalwart form was in the doorway behind her, rising head and shoulders above her, a face as handsome as the woman's face, and fully as white and fearless, appeared suddenly in the twilight. Before Elliot Darrow could speak, a cut from the Sheriff's whip made the bully's horse leap aside, and the whole party sped away in the evening shadows down the Trail.

Late that night Mark and Elliot sat alone by the fire, when Mark suddenly exclaimed:

"Elliot, let me tell you something that Lucy told me Sunday. Lucy is a funny girl. She's not a bit like Beth. She's nicer, I think."

"All right. What did she say?" Elliot asked.

"Say, Ellie, you won't tell, will you?" Mark queried.

"I am not likely to to-night, anyhow, for it takes a week for you to get it out of your own system."

"Well, well, Lucy is just like her father. She goes to pieces so quick. Craig's got all the self-control in the family." Mark paused, but Elliot said nothing.

"You know the Penwins lived pretty fine in the South. Lucy says they spent lots of money, and her father is n't happy if he can't just have everything luxurious and spend all he wants to. That was partly why they left Georgia. They had some financial trouble or other."

"Is that why he came to Kansas? Gloriously luxurious living here, I should say," Elliot put in.

"Lucy is impulsive, cries easy, and laughs easy, and she just can't keep a secret. Going home Sunday she said her father had told her and Craig and Tarley not to have anything more to do with us or Lamonds or Wrens."

"Good. What are Craig and Lucy and Tarley going to do?" Elliot did not seem so very much distressed.

"Oh, they were going to just pay no attention to him, but Lucy was scared Sunday, for her father told them not to go to church, and they went, and then she was scared for fear Colonel Penwin would do something awful because I went home with her."

"What did he say?" Elliot asked.

"Nothing! I met him just as I was starting home, and I lifted my old cap and said 'Good afternoon.'"

Elliot smiled at the boy's coolness.

"He just lifted his hat, like a born gentleman, not a Kansas made one, and said 'Good afternoon, sir.' Craig 's a born gentleman, too. I saw Lucy at the store in Palmyra to-day and she said she was so glad her father has changed again and told them it 's all right.

"What 's all right?"

"Oh, now, Ellie, it's all right for us all to go nutting together and to church, and for Craig to go home with Beth, same as you do. Now, do you understand?"

"Perfectly."

"Then shut up," Mark snapped, and both were silent.

Colonel Boniface Penwin did not make known to his children the cause for his sudden change of heart, when he reversed his own decision with them. He had always been implicitly obeyed and extravagantly loved by his family. It had been an extraordinary shock to him to find his children openly disregarding his commands, as it had been a shock to them when they found they dared to do it. His first impulse was to bring down a storm of wrath upon their heads. It was Tarleton, his youngest born, who had shown him a better way.

The Colonel had ridden home from the church service at Palmyra determined to bring his children to judgment. But as he neared the house the sight of little Tarley sitting forlornly alone by the wayside, waiting for him, broke up all parental resolve.

"Come, baby," he said, affectionately, "were you waiting for me?" He helped the boy to the saddle bow.

"You, or Craig, or Lucy;" Tarley's eyes were full of tears. "I'm so lonely. I don't have anybody any more."

"That's so, Tarley," his father said, soothingly. "You don't disobey like Lucy and Craig, do you?"

"Why don't you 'tend like what they do is what you want them to do, papa?" Tarley asked, innocently. "I've got lots of things from Craig that I wanted by pretending like I didn't care for them."

"By George, Tarley, that's good philosophy. I believe I'll try it."

He kissed the boy tenderly as he lifted him from the horse, and sent him into the house. Could Tarley have

seen his father's face then he would have been shocked at the storm reflected there. Sorrow, love, remorse, and bitter hate,—soul passions—surging in strife on the battle ground of that finely featured countenance. Coke Wren was right in saying there is no other burden equal to the burden of packing around with one every day the man whom he despises.

This, then, was how it happened that Boniface Penwin had greeted Mark Darrow with genuine Southern courtesy when he had escorted Lucy home from Palmyra, and the same principle had led the father to say at dinner:

"Children, you must get lonely. I don't care if you do make companions to a degree, of course, with the Lamonds and Darrows. But keep in mind who you are and that your father and theirs can never be very friendly."

Lucy had greeted her father's words with a shout of joy and hugged him lovingly. Craig said not a word, and Colonel Penwin felt for the first time that his eldest-born had gotten from him, and that his authority would be accepted at Craig's discretion, not through his parental power. And the Colonel was not happier thereby.

Whether or not Sheriff Jones meant to enlist Boniface Penwin in the seizure of Branson, he left the impression with the Darrow family that that had been his purpose, and the thought of it widened further still the breach between Craig and Elliot.

The sound of a horse's feet on the hard, white Trail came faintly to the ears of the two boys sitting silently before the fire.

"I wonder who that can be?" Mark said. "Here's me for my outlook aloft," and he clawed his way up the log angle to his Darrarat nook.

Three-quarters of a November moon was shining white and cold overhead.

"For the love of George Fox and Isaac Pennington, Elliot Darrow, it's Lamond's black horse, and Beth is on it. Run quick; she's coming here."

Elliot did not wait for the last words. He was out in the white, cold moonlight before the horse and rider had reached the evergreens' shadows. The animal rushed up the slope and straight to where he stood, and Beth slid quickly to the ground.

"Oh, Elliot," she gasped, and then the evergreens swam before her.

Elliot would have caught her in his arms to steady her, but she was herself in a moment. Mark came quickly to the bridle rein.

"Take her in the house, Elliot. I'll hold Pluto."

Elliot felt her shiver as he led her into the dark hall, lighted only by the red glow down in the center. How cosy a thing a rough stone fireplace can be when the light is low and the outside world is cold! Beth was chilled by the sharp November night air and the sharper fear that had come with her ride. Elliot put her in Hiram Darrow's big warm-cushioned chair and waited for her to speak. How strong he looked, standing there in the vigor of his young manhood! How firm-knit his frame, how easy his motions, and gentle the touch of his hand! And, above all, how handsome the fine face with the heavy dark hair, the keen dark eyes, and the winning smile! A face that more than one woman would love and dream of in the years to come. And then the cabin seemed so strong and safe from the dangers outside. These things came half realized into Beth's mind.

As for Elliot, he had forgotten how unhappy he had been a week ago. He knew that Beth was there, that

some trouble was very near, and the chickens were crowing at some far-away settler's habitation, and that he was very glad for all of these things.

Beth gave one great sigh of comfort.

"I was so frightened, I could n't talk at first," she said. "I must hurry back home, for mother is alone and scared as I am. But I 'm all right now." The warm color had come to her pale cheeks. "It was that Indian."

"What Indian, in heaven's name, Beth? And what brings you here?" Elliot spoke eagerly.

"Oh, Elliot, I am helping father to spread the news. I went to three other places before I came up here, and right at the edge of the timber, up that little draw, an Indian came out, and I thought he started after me. He rode like it. I could see his blanket and the feathers in his hair. But Pluto outran him."

"Beth, Indians don't ride at night. Are you sure it was an Indian?" Elliot asked.

"Oh, I thought so. Maybe I was too scared." She could not help smiling at herself, and her courage took a new grip. "Father has gone with a crowd of men to save a man's life. Sheriff Jones and a gang of desperadoes went to Mr. Branson's house with a warrant for his arrest to-night, and they have taken him away. Branson was the friend of Dow, the man murdered last week. The pro-slavery men have some flimsy excuse for having him arrested, and they will kill him as soon as they get the chance. All the settlers over that way are after the Sheriff's gang. There are only a few Free-State men west of us, and there is no telling what will happen."

Beth tried to be brave, but her voice faltered and her eyes filled with tears. Elliot longed to take her in his arms, but he controlled himself.

"I won't play the fool every time I have the chance," he said to himself. Then to her he spoke assuringly.

"Yes, there is some telling what will happen if David Lamond is in the company. There will be plenty of things happening every minute."

"But father said he had sent word to your father and Coke Wren to meet them at Abbott's place, and they will all be together."

"Well, Beth, my father is the peace-lovingest man that ever came out of the old Indiana White Water Quaker Yearly Meeting, as we used to say back there, but I would n't want to be Sheriff Jones if Hiram Darrow wanted what he had bad enough to go after it. He 's no Scotchman," Elliot's eyes twinkled, "and he never carried a gun in his life. We Quakers are not soldiers; but he 's not a man to trifle with, as I found out long ago."

"I hope there will be no danger to-night; but what I am to do is to tell everybody to go up to Lawrence to-morrow. There will be trouble, and nobody knows what awful thing may happen next. They want all the men to go to Lawrence as soon as they can get there to-morrow morning. I must go now."

"Wait a minute till I tell mother where I am going, and I 'll go home with you. Who else is to be notified?"

"You are the last ones. Had n't you better stay here? I can make Pluto fly over the prairie going home. I am not afraid, now truly. You 'd better not leave your mother alone," Beth urged.

"And you 'd better not say that mother would be alone where Mark can hear you," Elliot said, smiling. "Mark is a game-cock in his own eyes."

The night was crisp and clear. The white Trail glistened in the dim, frosty light, but the spirit of peace was

gone from the land, and the two hurried along the way, leading the big black horse after them.

At the Lamond's cabin Elliot waited a little before he said good-by. The dead vines rattled drearily about the stone pillars now, and there was no genial air to make the night pleasant.

"Are you going to Lawrence, too?" Beth asked as Elliot turned to say good-night. "You won't leave your mother, will you?"

"Yes, I'm going to start early. Mother is the most fearless woman I ever saw. And as I said at home, Mark will be there, and Joe, too. Don't forget Joe. The days do change patterns here, don't they, Beth?"

He had taken her hand. It was cold, and he held it a moment in his warm palm.

"Beth," he spoke gently. "I am so sorry and ashamed for what I did that I had no right to do the last night I was here. I mean that moonlight night in October."

"For what you told Craig?" Beth said coldly.

The sting of the young Southerner's words was bitter again in her memory. And then her pulse beat fast, for Elliot was very near her and his touch was so gentle, yet so strong. She was angry that she cared at all for what he might say to her, since he had spoken so carelessly of her. She just wanted everything to go back and be as it had been once.

"Let's forget and start over." Her voice would tremble.

"I cannot forget nor start over," Elliot answered, frankly. "But I never told Craig anything. Did he say I did?"

Beth could not have said a word more in explanation. She was but a timid girl in things like these.

"I am sorry you try to deny anything," she said,

firmly, trying to withdraw her hand, but Elliot held it fast and took her other hand as well.

"Beth, Beth," his voice was deep and sweet and he looked down steadily into her face. "I never told Craig anything. I have n't anything to deny. Good-night," and he left her.

The little November moon was covered with gray clouds and the night was very cold. Elliot did not follow the Trail, but, as was his custom, took the shortest line across the open prairie toward a light glimmering like a beacon faintly to the eastward.

"Mark must have put a lantern up in his Darrarat for me," he said. "He 's a good boy to think of it. I don't need any light, but it is a friendly thing to see."

Far and wide there was no other light on the plain, swept by the drear November wind, and the world looked big and dull and lonely. Down in a shallow draw, where sometimes after rainy weather a little stream ran toward the ravine, a few rock layers jutted out, making a darker spot of shade. Even in the dim light Elliot's quick eye noted that the shade was too big for the rock, and he started toward the place.

"It looks like somebody lying there, but — it is n't," he thought. "It 's a bed quilt. No, it 's a blanket, and a hole. Somebody has been digging here."

He stooped and lifted a coarse dark blanket from the ground. Three or four white turkey quills were sticking in its rough meshes.

"Beth's Indian!" he exclaimed. "Is that White Turkey Delaware running loose down here or is somebody playing Indian? From all I ever heard of them, the Delawares don't put up this kind of a trick at night. But you can't tell. Maybe he was digging for some hidden treasure."

He rolled the blanket up and threw it under the rock shelf.

"Some poor, cold settler might find that and take it home, and fight vermin or worse for a year. The Indians are a dirty lot. I'll hide it under there till later. Maybe this White Turkey left the rest of his raiment somewhere out here, too, and went home this cold night wearing only his warpaint and a vengeful expression. I'll come back by daylight and look for it soon."

Elliot had not only a plainsman range of vision, he had the sense of hearing that goes with it. As he reached the top of the swell beyond the dip in the prairie, he heard far away the sound of a horse's feet. He listened; then put his ear to the ground to get the direction. The sounds grew fainter, and were lost in the west somewhere.

"If Coke Wren wasn't at Lawrence to-night I would say that was his pony, Cotton Mather. It has such a funny hop. But he didn't ride the pony; he went with father and some Palmyra men."

Elliot was puzzled. "It couldn't be Patty. And yet it's hard to tell what that little pigeon will do. Oh, well, it may be anybody — the Indian, likely, hunting his blanket or his tepee. It's going west, whatever it is."

Elliot stood still on the top of the swell and looked out over the Vinland Valley, a shadowy land lying like a dim sea reaching on to the limit of blank darkness. He recalled with wonderful keenness the warm, lazy afternoon in October when he and Beth and Craig had sat through the hour looking out on this same valley, so dull and cold to-night.

"Beth was right," he murmured, half aloud. "Every day brings its new pattern to be worked out, and we are changing every day. I wonder where Craig is to-

night. Beth didn't go over to Penwin's, too, when she came to give us word of to-morrow's work. And yet she thinks of Craig, I know, or she wouldn't quote him so much."

He gazed eagerly down to where the heaviest shadows far away marked Lamond's little stone cabin in the valley.

"There is something wrong about the Penwins. The Colonel is bitter against all of us because we are Abolitionists, but somehow none of us blame Craig. Where would he stand if the test comes? Not with us, I'm sure."

The young man turned to go, half consciously waving his hand toward the Lamond home.

"Good-by, Beth. I wish I knew what Craig could have said. I've always thought him honorable, even if I don't like him. I wish I knew, too, how much she cares for him."

Then he set his teeth together and a stern look came into his dark eyes.

"I may as well face the truth. There isn't anybody else in the world like Beth. Will she ever think the same of me? She must. I can wait, but I will win."

He threw a kiss toward the shadowed valley and started on his way.

"What will happen up at Lawrence?" he mused. "We are through with talking now out here. We must be doing things. I wonder how it would seem to be back East again. I had a kind of a sweetheart there last year. I had about forgotten her, for she wasn't a real sweetheart, either. That was before I knew Beth. There isn't any of this trouble in Indiana, but I wouldn't go back there if I could."

And the young man, striding through the gloom of

the night, gave greater promise of what should rule a State than rows of cannon on stoutest breastwork could offer.

Meanwhile far in the west the pattering feet of Coke's pony, Cotton Mather, clicked hard on the Trail as its rider urged it toward the deepening gloom of the horizon.

Elliot had guessed right. It was Patty Wren alone on the dark trail along which strange drunken horsemen had so recently ridden.

"I can outrun 'em, or I can dodge 'em, and I want to know now, does enybody reckon I'd let a lone woman be left scared to death, and me just set there on the edge of that ravine like a guinea that had stole'd her nest? I ain't that kind of a chicken. Ef we want liberty here, we'd better be doin' somethin' for it."

Patty talked to herself and she had the same drawl that marked Coke's provincial tongue. But if she was slow of speech, she was swift in action. An hour before she had been riding on the same errand that had sent Beth to the Darrow home. As she returned to her little cabin the thought of Coke made her lonely. And then the thought of her loneliness if Coke should never come again, made vivid to her what this night must mean to a frightened woman miles away, whose husband was even then in the hands of a brutal gang under pretence of arrest by Sheriff Jones.

"Poor Mis' Branson! And them men may kill Branson to-night. I'd put on my brown alpacky dress and go to his funeral to-morrow. I'll just tie my hood on tight and go to her this night. Lord save me ef I don't."

So that was how it happened that Elliot had heard Cotton Mather's feet on the Trail. And that was why a terror-stricken woman alone in her cabin saw God's

providence come in the form of a settler's funny little peaked-face wife.

"There was a big crowd of men here yesterday. Free-State men, planning how to avenge the murder of Mr. Dow, but there was nobody to help us this night when we were all alone. The Sheriff and his men rushed in here after we had gone to bed." Mrs. Branson told Patty this in the early morning hours as the two sat alone in the dark cabin, afraid to have a light. "They took my husband away with them. He did n't even have time to put on clothes enough to keep him warm. They started off north. I don't know what they 'll do." She wrung her hands in grief. "They had a warrant to arrest him. He never harmed a man in his life."

"And neither ain't he goin' to be harmed, Mis' Branson," Patty said, soothingly. "The settlers clear from Lawrence to Palmyra will be up in arms. They 'll git your man away from that Sheriff's ruffians soon or late, an' there won't be a hair or hide of him hurt. He won't be put in no jail."

"I 'm afraid the men will kill him first," moaned Mrs. Branson.

"No, they won't. No, they won't," urged Patty, stroking the woman's hand with her smooth, hard little claw. "They 's a Good Bein' won't let 'em."

And Patty was right. A dozen men, fully half of them unarmed, but none of them afraid, who had heard the news that night, had gathered in the path of the Sheriff and his victim. The bitter air chilled them, but the need for action kept their hearts warm. Winthrop Merriford was in command of the company, with David Lamond aiding him. Coke Wren and Hiram Darrow, without weapons of any kind, were the least fearful of the outcome.

"They 're comin', boys," Coke spoke low. "I hear 'em down south. Reckon they think if they can git Branson up to Lecompton they 'll have him safe."

The men huddled together as they waited beside a settler's homestead.

"Steady, boys; don't fire unless you have to," Merriford commanded.

"But if there must be a war let it begin here," David Lamond added, remembering the Minute Men of '75 on the Lexington Common.

Down the road came the sound of horses' feet. With curses and coarse jeers, with whisky bottles and swinging rope ends suggesting torture and death, an irregular squad of a score or more of armed men hurried through the dark toward the house beside which the little group stood. In the midst of this mob was their prisoner, so thinly clad he seemed almost exhausted with the cold. For miles he had heard nothing but threats and taunts, until at last, when the Sheriff declared, "You 'll never see the inside of any jail," Branson had answered, "Let it come quick, then."

"We don't need to be quick with this hangin'," the man next the Sheriff exclaimed, with an oath. "There was a hundred men at your house yesterday bragging of what they 'd do to us fellows, but you 've got no friends to help you now, and if you had we could put a hundred of them on the run in two minutes. Every man here 's good for three Free-State men at least."

They were near the cabin now, and the little group of men showed dimly in the gray light. The score and more good-for-three-men each fronted the half-score and two, and the test of courage was on.

"Ride on t' other side of the house, and ride hard," ordered Sheriff Jones, and the band obeyed.

But before them on the other side of the cabin the settlers again lined up.

The horsemen halted.

"What's up?" demanded Jones.

"That's what we want to know — what's up?" Merriford answered, and then he asked:

"Is Mr. Branson with you?"

"I am here, a prisoner." Branson spoke now.

"Ride out to our side," Merriford commanded, and Branson obeyed.

There were only a dozen men on foot, half of them without weapons, and they stood before twice that number of armed men on horseback. But men are not counted by numbers when they stand up as a wall in defence of the right.

"I'll shoot you if you move," Sheriff Jones roared at Branson. "I'll bring two thousand men here from Missouri in two days. There won't be a man left of you. We'll hang you all and burn your houses and paint your wives black and sell 'em for niggers." Jones was in a fury now; while a volley of oaths and a belching forth of direst threats of vengeance, degradation, and torture made chorus to his solo. But not a Free-State settler flinched.

"Go your way. We are done with you," Merriford declared, as he drew off his outer coat and wrapped it around Branson's shoulders.

"But I'm not done with you, you Yankee Abolitionists, you idiotic dreamers," Sheriff Jones burst out. "I'll show you what it means to stop an officer of the law. Your day is only beginnin'. You can quit your dreamin' about what you call your liberty and git out and fight for it."

"I want to know, hain't we got out now for liberty,

but there hain't no apparent need of fightin' any," Coke Wren drawled in his quaint way. "We got to pick somebody nearer our own size for that, it seems."

With viler threats and much foul abuse, the mob turned about and rode furiously away.

"Let's get this man to Lawrence as soon as we can," Merriford urged. "The Sheriff is right. The dream of liberty is ending. From this time it will be a sacrifice for it."

"It's ten miles to Lawrence. Branson, are you good for it?" Lamond asked.

"I'll do my best," Branson answered, in a choking voice. "You men don't know how good you seem to me. I expected to be hung within an hour."

"Say, did you ever see a king?" questioned Wren, close to Branson's side. "Ef you never did, look at Winthrop Merriford stridin' along there, an' that Scotchman, Lamond. He'd a' shot first if it had a' been real necessary, an' Darrow's not scared o' nothin' on the Lord's footstool. Ain't they a set of real men, now? Dreamin' of Liberty! Well, I reckon they'll make their dreams come true ef they pay out their heart's blood for it."

"And what about Coke Wren, if Merriford is a king among men?" a good-natured settler next to the little Yankee asked.

"Oh, I reckon I'm the king's fool, but if they think I just dream of doin' things and don't das to *do 'em,* I'll keep on foolin' 'em plenty and to spare."

The morning breeze threshed down the Wakarusa with a biting cold as, weary and chill and footsore from their ten miles' hurried march, the little band of men with him whom they had rescued from torture and cruel death crept toward the village of Lawrence. In each man's

heart he knew that Sheriff Jones had spoken truly — that deeds and not words must count now in the building of a State. And they steeled their spirits to whatever sacrifice the days should ask of them.

PART TWO

THE SACRIFICE

By all for which the martyrs bore their agony and shame;
By all the warning words of truth with which the prophets came;
By the Future which awaits us; by all the hopes which cast
Their faint and trembling beams across the blackness of the Past;
And by the blessed thought of Him who for Earth's freedom
died,
O my people! O my brothers! let us choose the righteous side.

— Whittier.

CHAPTER IX

WAR ON THE WAKARUSA

Laughed out the true Daughters, "All men shall behold
How we clothe her in Samite and crown her with gold!"
But the bitter ones cried, "Though her meadows be sweet,
We will drench them with blood till she kneels at our feet!"
— Amanda T. Jones.

LIKE ocean tides sweeping in from illimitable, watery spaces which no man can measure, the bleak December winds swept the open Kansas plains. And although the uplands were colorless and the Vinland Valley was only a waste of dead grasses with a black tracery of leafless boughs along its sheltered waterways, the shining silvery heavens were never so glorious, nor did purple dawn and scarlet sunset lose one unit of their splendor. The world God made lay peacefully beautiful in its winter resting time. Not so the world of man threshed with the flail of men's bitter passions.

Along the old Santa Fé Trail a noisy crew came scurrying in disorder; drunken men, boasters, bullies, gathered from the mud-banks of the Missouri, all rushing to the rallying ground on the Wakarusa. They were heavily armed. They rode steeds of as nondescript variety as the class of beings to which they themselves belonged. Their words were mingled with oaths and coarse jests, and the one slogan and rallying cry of this outlaw pack was "Death to the Yankees." The mad rout of these prairie pirates was but the joyous response of the forces over the eastern border to the call of Sheriff Jones. Nor did

the call come unexpectedly to their ears. Their time was ripe, his word their signal to begin.

The Sheriff had been true to the threat made to the rescuers of Branson. He promised them that they should suffer in full for their act of opposing an officer of the law. Like the autumn prairie fires of the short grass plains, the howl of Sheriff Jones swept along the land, gathering volume as it rolled eastward, the cry that Kansas was in a state of rebellion, that mob rule was supreme, that officers of the law were powerless to act, that no Pro-Slavery man's life was safe, that nothing short of a force of hundreds of armed men could restore civil peace. And loudest of all did Jones bellow forth the edict that Lawrence must not be left with one stone upon another.

It was not, however, to the law-abiding men of the Kansas Territory to whom he appealed for aid in suppressing the rebels within her borders, but to the Missouri militia, with whatever of volunteer service that the rabble always furnishes in the hey-day of licensed lawlessness. It must have been that the very winds that swept across the eastern boundary bore his cry thither. Else in a land without telegraph or telephone how should such a horde have heard and answered so quickly? With any sort of man who would carry arms, on any sort of steed that would carry a man, and with a wagon bearing ammunition, provisions, and the inevitable jug of the Tonic of Ambition, they came forth by bands — for one purpose — to wipe from the land every vestige — save the spilled blood — of the Yankee settler and the Free-State Abolitionist.

Fifteen hundred strong, they gathered on the banks of the Wakarusa, and their camp fires signaled hatred, destruction, loot, and murder to that defenceless land

through which the Wakarusa wanders on its way to meet the Kaw. They wanted to fight, this valiant host, else they would not have volunteered; they wanted to kill, else they would not fight; they wanted to plunder and destroy, else fighting and killing were a waste of energy. This invading band was increased by the Pro-Slavery men of the Territory, but they were a mere handful without the alien force brought in to win the struggle to a cause alien to Kansas. All these centered on the Wakarusa banks facing Lawrence.

For Lawrence, too, was a rallying ground, the center and source of the Territory's rebellious strength. The best blood of New England was in Lawrence. The voice of Massachusetts,

> For us and for our children, the vow that we have given
> For freedom and humanity is registered in heaven;

was the voice of Lawrence likewise in these daring days. With the sack and pillage of this town, the houses burned and the citizens routed or forever stilled, the Free-State power in Kansas could never rally again.

The border towns were hot-beds of Pro-Slavery forces already. The scattered settlers could be dealt with. Grim term that, "dealt with"! Heaven save those who might be so "dealt with." Eighteen months had passed wherein the Territory had been the scene of all manner of lawlessness, from petty annoyance to vilest outrage. The Free-State citizens had so patiently endured it all that they came to be regarded as having no resisting spirit, and this one blow at Lawrence would finish them, so the enemies to the Territory reasoned. The story of the West would be written then along vastly different lines. But this blow must be struck now.

And so it was that in these December days in all the scattered settlements, the little pioneer homes were left with only the protection of the mothers, while the fathers went hurrying up to Lawrence at the call of the higher duty. With all speed the word was sent from claim to claim, and up from all the fair valleys strong men came eagerly to the defence of the town marked for doom, the aftermath of whose destruction would be the easy obliteration of the separated, unorganized settlements. These earnest men came for defence in a just cause, and only in defence should a hand be lifted against the invading gang who sought their lives.

And so it was that in these December days the little town of Lawrence was fortified round about by earthworks, hastily thrown up and patrolled by relays of organized forces. And while all men wore the garb of civil life, and the business of the place went quietly forward, down in the open plain the volunteer soldiery under Colonel Lane drilled silently and steadily; and in the town the women molded bullets for the men; and all awaited expectantly the hour of vengeful strife.

So a week went by, a gloomy seven days of increasing heaviness. By incessant labor five fortifications had been erected to guard the river and the land entrance to the besieged town. Day and night in the chill early winter days the men worked to strengthen the defence. Along either side of Massachusetts Street, a wide roadway that should one day grow into a broad avenue, intrenchments were thrown up. Sentinels were set night and day on the high places, and every force that could offer aid and protection was called into action. And all the while on the bleak top of Mount Oread, where its colors could be seen and its message read for miles and miles, the Stars and Stripes floated bravely out in proud serenity. But

in the event of an attack there was no cannon for defence, ammunition was quite insufficient, food supplies were reduced, the increasing number in the enemy's camp was known to a certainty, and, crowning all, the United States Government had authorized the course of Governor Shannon and Sheriff Jones, and the Border held men and means ready to reinforce both.

In the evening of one of the darkest of these days a company of men gathered for council in Winthrop Merriford's office; leading men they were who that day held the fate of the Territory in their grasp. Among them were Dr. Robinson, conservative and capable, and Colonel Lane, aggressive and resourceful. And by the law of attraction the remaining numbers were grouped around the one or the other of these two. Lamond sat next to Lane; a brawny Scot he appeared that night, with other big, determined men about him. Merriford and Coke Wren fitted into the group around Robinson; while belonging to neither one, yet high in the esteem of every man there, Hiram Darrow sat with thoughtful but unclouded face. By his side was John Speer, editor and patriot, whose life story is also the story of Lawrence and her struggles.

"What of the hour?" was each man's query as they settled themselves into the limited space of the narrow room.

"We must think for ourselves and for those who depend on our direction before we act," Doctor Robinson said.

"But let us not think too long, and act too slowly," Lane exclaimed. "There are fifteen hundred men in the camp on the Wakarusa, all primed to annihilate us. We have perhaps five hundred men here in Lawrence. There are three to one, you see. We cannot expect that many

more will get into town to join us, for we are surrounded by our enemies and the south and west fords are all guarded. I don't know how many more those fellows over there may count on joining them. It will be two to one and to spare, anyhow. In an open battle the odds would be heavy."

"But if it is necessary I would risk it," Lamond asserted. "We can't expect to take Gibraltar with a bombardment of boiled peas. We are here to defend this place to the last." He looked the part he would be expected to play in this grim tragedy, not as a prize-fighting bully, but as a big, determined, courageous man.

"Lawrence is on the defensive. Absolutely there is no rebellion against the Government here," Merriford declared. "If we could once get Governor Shannon to understand us, we would feel safe; as it is, we must strengthen the fortifications and wait for their action."

"It will be hard work to do that," Lamond declared. "The men here are leaving their homes unprotected. They want to finish this thing and get back to their claims. There are women and children alone and defenceless that need them every day. What do you say, Barber?" turning to a young man who sat next to him.

"Mr. Lamond is right," Barber agreed. "When I left home I promised my wife to be back soon. She was almost beside herself with fear and anxiety then. For myself, I cannot get home too soon. The women have the worst of this, anyhow. But I am here to see it through, and while I believe in the defensive policy only, I know the men are anxious and the outlook is gloomy. Being on the defensive may not change results."

"We need more than men here," Lane said. "Loaded wagons from Missouri were stopped and overhauled yesterday at the Wakarusa ford. We are running low on

provisions and ammunition, and these wagons were bringing supplies of both to Lawrence," and Lane frowned darkly at the thought of the loss. Then he added, "I wish I knew the conditions in their camp."

"There's not a man of us here who dares, on peril of his life, to go far enough from town to get anything or find out anything," Doctor Robinson added. "No friend of Lawrence could get by their guns. It would be suicide for the one who risked it, and homicide for us to permit it."

"I want to know," Coke Wren broke in; "then I'm up for a double crime. I took myself out of here last night. That's suicide in the first degree. And I was consenting and held the coats of the fellows, so to speak, who suffered me to go. I'm them fellows. That's unjustifiable homicide. I've been all over their camp since seven o'clock last night, and I'd have been there longer if Colonel Penwin had n't been in my way, headin' me off."

"Why have n't you told us before?" demanded Robinson.

"Been waiting to have my sentence pronounced first," Coke answered. "Now I know I'm a suicide and a homicide, I can tell just what to count on."

"Oh, go on, Wren," Merriford urged. "Tell us the situation."

"Grave, very grave," Wren resumed. "A few gentlemen of Colonel Boniface Penwin's type. And they are dangerous, for they're the brains of the crowd. Then there's the official board, Jones and his superior and inferior officers, who are in command. The rest just pauperize all description. But they all have a few points in common. They all want a fight, and they all want to kill somebody, bad, and they all want whisky, and they all want to get this job pushed through. The camp ain't

no cavalry quarters like West Point, and the big cry is to rush on to Lawrence immediately. They can't be held back much longer if something does n't happen. They figure they can swoop down here and beat us into the bushes in one sitting."

"When is that to be?" Lamond asked.

"Oh, quick. They asked me all about our defences. They took me for one of 'em, that's the way I look." And Wren gave a comical twist to his face, that only he could effect.

"You seemed to be safe enough," Doctor Robinson said with a smile.

"I was all right till Penwin caught sight of me. Then I just faded away in the dark and made for Lawrence."

"How did you get by their men at the Wakarusa crossing?" Lane asked. "They keep that guarded night and day."

Coke stiffened at this. "There's the place of suicide and homicide, sure. I see four big men, all armed, standin' up in my road, and at the same minute they see me. So I just called out my New England reserves, and I stalked along, singin' out loud some old sailor song that had n't been in my head for twenty year. When they called 'Halt,' I just stalked right on, limpin' a little and slouchy. It just took 'em by surprise, and one of 'em say, 'Why don't you stop?' 'I ain't got no call to stop,' I says; 'I'm late as it is.' 'Where are you goin'?' says the spokesman. 'Where I darn please,' I answers. An' then one of 'em with shootin' irons dangerous and a good-sized bowie-knife steps close to me an' after eyein' me a minute — it seemed more like a year — he says, 'Aw, let 'im go; he's a half-idiot that belongs to a family livin' down by the Kaw.' An' I come over the Wakarusa dry shod."

"You think they mean to make the attack soon, then?" Merriford suggested.

"At the first minute they feel sure we are at their mercy. Consarn 'em! That's the lawlessest gang of robbers an' cut-throats that ever had decent men in their midst. Some of 'em, a precious few, but some, ought to know better 'n ever to be caught in among 'em. Men like Penwin, now. He is a gentleman, 'most ways."

Darrow and Lamond exchanged glances as each recalled the evening hour at the Hole in the Rock.

"I heard something else, and that's the worst of all to me!" Coke went on. "They're tellin' all over the camp that the Delawares and Shawnees is to join 'em soon. A lot of wild savages could be no worse in that camp, but the mixin' sounds bad. And yet, I ain't real scared of none of 'em."

Nor was any other man scared. By the dim light of the office lamp every man's face looked brave and determined, but the burden of the time and the peril that the day might bring, not to these alone, but to all they loved, put lines of care into every face, and made each heart beat anxiously. It was the darkest hour the Territory had yet known. In the silence that followed Coke's recital the helplessness of the little town seemed never so great as now, and in each man's mind the question of how to meet the issues of the hour cried for an answer, and with each the belief in the victory of the smaller host against the larger was burdened by a heavy uncertainty.

The stillness of the room was broken by Hiram Darrow's voice, calm, gentle, but nothing faltering. "It will be fair again to-morrow, and the night will soon be gone. Every step of our way will open clear before us, but we cannot take to-morrow's step to-night. We should stumble if we tried it. We cannot fail. I believe we shall not

even be asked to shed human blood. Our times are in God's hands. Let us meet here again in the morning and see what the day demands of us then. Good-night," and he left the room.

"There's a man for you; sounds like hammerin' on old Plymouth Rock when he talks. Do you s'pose he'd fight if there was a war right now?" Coke Wren asked.

"I can't tell," Merriford answered, "but I don't believe he'd run. Those Quakers are made of queer timber. You never can break them. Excellent foundation on which to build a community or a State, though."

"Darrow is the salt of the earth," Lamond said, "but he's eternally set in his doctrine of 'peace on earth.' Kansas seems to have been left out of that scheme somehow. However, he's right about to-night. Let's see what to-morrow will bring." And the company broke up.

In the gray light of the early morning Winthrop Merriford heard a gentle tapping outside his window.

"Who's there?" he called softly, as the signal had suggested.

Outside in the dim light stood a Delaware Indian.

Merriford lifted the sash and asked: "What's the matter now?"

"Me, White Turkey," came the answer.

"Well, come in, White Turkey. Why didn't you go to the door in the first place?"

"Him here?" the Indian asked.

"Whom do you mean?" queried Merriford.

"Him, me not want him, Jupe," answered White Turkey.

"Oh, I see," muttered the lawyer. "Aristocracy of hue. Copper is copper, and yellow brown is yellow brown." Then aloud he said, "No, Jupe isn't here right now; come in."

But when he reached the front door Jupe stood ready to open it.

"Thank you, Jupe," he said, smoothly. "You may go to bed again."

Merriford thought Jupe's action peculiar, for he managed to so open the door that the Indian did not see him, and the lawyer felt sure that he did not follow out the permission given him to go to bed.

"Let him listen if he wants to. It will help me to the end of the problem sooner," and Merriford led the Indian into the parlor and closed the door.

White Turkey stood with folded arms, ignoring the invitation to take a seat.

"Me quick." He spoke easily now. "At midnight in big wigwam white men come, one, two, three, four," he told off on his fingers, "all big men, gather all braves into big wigwam. Promise Delawares gold and whisky to go to Wakarusa camp. Help burn Lawrence. Help kill medicine man Robinson, Colonel Lane, Lamond, Darrow, Merriford, John Speer. All these sure, and more. Braves listen. Chiefs tell Sheriff Jones' men, 'We wait. Come again,' Men go back. White Turkey follow. Hear men say, 'Delawares get drunk, they all go to Wakarusa.' Men say, 'Tell everybody now Delawares have already promised. Scare white men. Scare white women. Ugh!'"

"What will the Delawares do, White Turkey?" Merriford asked, with a shudder as he pictured what added horror an Indian massacre would produce.

The Delaware's face was utterly expressionless as though the soul behind it were void of all sympathy. He waited his own time, then answered slowly: "Darrow. Him be killed, too. Specially killed. Darrow's squaw, white face, like lily on Horse-Shoe Lake. White

squaw kind. Let White Turkey sleep in warm house, eat, drink, rest. While winds blow and Wakarusa run down to the Kaw, Delawares not let hair of white woman's head be touched."

"Good for you, my boy; that's all we ask of you," Merriford exclaimed.

But the Indian was not satisfied. "Delaware braves help Lawrence men if white men want braves. We wait."

"Thank you, White Turkey. We will let you know if we need you. We do not want to fight, nor mean to fight unless we must, but we will protect our homes and we will not give up our right to live here. Come into the office this morning; I want to talk to you there."

As the Indian turned to go Merriford recalled that he had not wished to have Jupe see him, and wondered why.

"Just a minute, my friend," he said, kindly. "Will you tell me why you did n't want Jupe to know you were here?"

The stolid coppery face almost changed its expression. Almost, but settled back into a bronze firmness.

"Jupe know why," he answered, and the lawyer would not question him further.

"All right. Be sure to let Jones and his gang wait long enough for your answer to them," and Merriford led the way into the hall.

Jupe stood by the door to open it. The Indian was swift-footed. With a stride he shot through the door and was gone. To a man less quick-witted this was all that happened, but Merriford was alert and he caught the Indian's low "Don't tell yet," as he passed the negro, and the quick response of intelligence in Jupe's face, whose countenance, unlike the Indian, he could not control.

The morning was clear and the December sunshine filled the plains with its splendor. Up and down the Kaw River, all purple and silver in the mists of the crisp new day, the landscape wore no token of the warring spirit that held the hearts of men. No dreams of peaceful vales were sweeter than the peaceful earth under the unscarred heavens on this rare day.

From the top of Mount Oread, Elliot Darrow, doing sentinel duty, saw all the beauty of river and plain and far gleaming headland. Small wonder that in his heart he hated war and longed for peace. This war was so contemptible, so uncertain, so unjust. In the midst of action he reasoned his soul might rise to meet the duty of the hour. But here were all the cheap things of strife, the petty subterfuge, the swinish appetites, the brutish cruelty,—the things that in his Quaker home he had been taught all his life to despise. He did not know then that these things belong to war, even to just war, and without them wars could not be. Longingly he turned his eyes toward the Vinland Valley, and he fancied he could trace the very purple shadow that lay beyond the sheltered nook holding the Lamond homestead. He thought of Beth, and his stern young face softened.

"She is a wonderful girl," he mused. "If I could once get her to understand how I hate myself for being rude to her that one time, and yet," the tender light in his dark eyes should have gladdened the heart of any girl, "after all, I am afraid I might want to be just as rude again. There is no telling. But that is all over now. There are too many things to think about."

How far removed from the careless boy who had gone nutting on an October afternoon with an equally careless crowd of boys and girls seemed this muscular young

fellow standing at sentinel duty on the highest point of Mount Oread. Through the stern business of the time he was coming swiftly into a man's estate. Beth Lamond had spoken truly when she said:

"One day here is like a rent, a sword cut, a shifting of all settled things to make the days afterward follow another pattern."

Elliot's days had fallen into new lines since that moonlit night when Beth had said these words. Although the young Quaker fancied he had put the girl out of his mind, his eyes still rested on the distant Vinland Valley. As his keen vision swept the plains far away, he caught sight of three horses coming swiftly from the south. He was standing motionless watching the three when another sentinel rounded the northern shoulder of Mount Oread.

"Hello, Darrow, you look like you could see clear into that camp on the Wakarusa," he cried.

"I'm watching those three horses yonder," Elliot answered.

"I don't see anybody. Yes, I do too; I guess they are horses. They may be buffalo, or just a field piece being brought in for Sheriff Jones to train on us."

Elliot looked at the speaker wonderingly. "There are three horses," he said after a pause.

"Yes, I can see that now myself," his comrade declared.

"There is a black one and a red roan, and the little one with a white nose looks for all the world like Coke Wren's vicious little pony Cotton Mather," Elliot said, still studying the view.

"Well, you've got mighty good eyes. What else do you see?" the sentinel asked.

"Two of them look like women," Elliot declared.

"He 's right," a voice behind them broke in. "There are two women;" and a tall Shawnee Indian stepped up beside them.

"Hello, Pelathe. Where did you come from?" asked Elliot's companion.

"I want him, young Darrow, to go to town with me," the Indian replied.

"Go along with him, Darrow," the sentinel urged. He is Pelathe, a Shawnee, and he 's all right too. I came up to relieve you, anyhow. I 'll keep a lookout for your white-nosed pony and your red roan, and your black horse, and your two women. Maybe they have kidnaped a Pro-Slavery man and are bringing him into Lawrence alive."

Elliot and the Shawnee strode down the steep slope of Mount Oread toward the town.

At the foot of the slope Pelathe turned to the young Quaker:

"Darrow, take me to Merriford's office."

"All right, we are heading that way," Elliot said.

"Darrow," the Indian paused a little. "You not go home now, they not need you."

Elliot stared at the speaker. "How do you know?" he asked.

"I was there." He waved his hand toward the Vinland Valley. "I know. You not go to-day."

A sudden recollection flashed through the young Quaker's mind, but he asked no further questions.

At the breakfast table that morning Jupe was standing behind Merriford's chair.

"Say, Jupiter," the lawyer said carelessly, "do you know White Turkey?"

"No sah!" the African answered promptly. "I is not familiar enough with the Lawrence hen-roosts yet to

know the white roosters even, let alone the white turkeys, sah."

"All right," his employer answered, as he turned in his chair and looked keenly into the negro's face, "you 'll soon be extending your acquaintances, I have no doubt."

The broad grin on Jupe's guileless countenance disappeared and in its place came a look of tenderness and pity the moment Merriford's face was turned away.

"Say, Mars'r Merriford, what 's gwine to be the end of this war for extermination?"

If using lengthy terms was to get Jupe out of bondage, his freedom was almost in sight.

"There is only one end to this kind of strife, Jupe. The Courts of History do not reverse themselves. Go now and warm up the office. I want to meet some men there in half an hour," and the servant was sent away.

"This game grows interesting," Merriford said to himself. "That man has nothing to gain by treachery. I have seldom been deceived in my judgment of motives, and I 'm sure the negro means well. There 's a big soul in that big body. It is just the little brain through which it must act that complicates things for him — and me. I 'll play the thing through, but my curiosity is getting whetted up."

Hiram Darrow was right in his prediction of a fair to-morrow. Every man who came to Merriford's office on this morning walked with firm step, and gloom seemed to have fled away with the shadows of the night. The impending danger was not lessened, but the spirit of manhood on which the enemy had not counted made stronger defence in Lawrence that day than cannon or earthwork or thick-walled fortress could afford.

"There were fifty men from Ottawa Creek who got in at midnight," Lane announced.

"The Palmyra mounted riflemen rode up the street just now with the flag flying over them. Every man who comes in that spirit brings the strength of ten men in his fighting arm," Lamond asserted.

"And we may get ammunition before night," Dr. Robinson declared. "Two of our noble women have already gone down to a claim, where there is a quantity buried. They can get it in here when none of us could. Hats off to the ladies." They rose to their feet with profound courtesy.

"I have some good news, too," Merriford announced, "I'm looking for a Delaware Indian here to tell us something. Here he comes now."

White Turkey was just entering, with Jupe close behind him.

"Here, White Turkey, tell these friends what your tribe will do in this trouble."

The Indian faced the company and with impassive countenance said slowly: "While winds blow and the Wakarusa runs down to the Kaw, the Delaware braves will not lift hands against Lawrence. We are ready to fight with you now."

A shout went up from the men at this declaration, and in the midst of the rejoicing Elliot Darrow and Pelathe, the Shawnee, entered the door. Pelathe was a fine specimen of his tribe, with a face of unusual intelligence and shrewdness. Two months before Elliot would have been ill at ease in this company. Now he spoke with courteous self-possession:

"Gentlemen, this man has something to tell you," and he turned to leave the room.

"Hold on, we may want you," Merriford said, and Elliot stopped by the closed door while Pelathe spoke.

"Sheriff Jones and the men on the Wakarusa say

Shawnees will join them against you. Shawnees will not fight against Lawrence. We will fight for you. When you want us we are ready."

A cheer followed this declaration, and in the confusion of voices nobody except Merriford and Lamond noted how quickly the Indian slid to the side of the young Quaker.

"You stay here, now?" he asked innocently, as he noted the nearness of Merriford and Lamond, but there was a meaning in his eyes that Elliot understood.

"Of course he will stay," Lamond said, "All our homes are unprotected. It would be cowardly for any one of us to leave now."

In truth Lamond had felt a pride in the young man from his own neighborhood who had already been recognized as courageous and trustworthy. The Indian turned carelessly. "Down in Palmyra country, you live?" he put the question indifferently.

"Were you ever there, Pelathe?" Elliot asked suddenly, and something in the young man's voice made Lamond and Merriford turn to look at him.

"When the moon was one quarter." A sudden gesture from White Turkey, who had joined the group, and the Shawnee added, "You stay with your father here."

He looked straight into Elliot's keen dark eyes as he spoke. Merriford alone noted the quick interchange of intelligence in the glances.

"One negro, two Indians and one white man," the lawyer said to himself, "a veritable house that Jack built. What next? How like Neil young Darrow looks now. I wish my boy was here."

"We are all agreed on the defensive line. Let us hope for peace and be ready for war," Dr. Robinson said to the whole company; then turning to the Indians, "We

thank your tribes more than we can say. We will call on you when we need you."

A commotion in the street brought the men to the door. As they hurried out, White Turkey managed to pass close to Elliot. The Indian gave him a swift glance, then in a low voice he said: "You go home. Don't listen to white man. Go home, don't listen to Indian. Pelathe talk truth, but White Turkey know. Go home."

A crowd had gathered in front of Merriford's office. In its midst stood Beth Lamond. Her dark gray eyes were shining with excitement. Her cheeks were pink from the sharp morning air, and her sunny hair curled softly up against the jaunty little cap of the Lamond plaid, while a big shawl of the same plaid was pinned snugly about her throat. In all the days that followed Elliot Darrow never lost that picture of Beth from his memory. Beside her, little Patty Wren was smiling cheerfully, while beyond them Craig Penwin was sitting with careless ease on a red roan horse, holding the reins of Lamond's black Pluto and little Cotton Mather. In the excitement of the moment nobody, not even Merriford, noted how quickly Jupe effaced himself from view, nor did any one catch the look of bitter hatred in White Turkey's still black eyes as he stalked away toward the Delaware reservation beyond the Kaw.

CHAPTER X

THE UNPROTECTED

One word tells you all I would say,—
She is my mother: You will agree
That all the rest may be thrown away.
— Alice Cary.

THE glory of war is to the rank and file; but the hardship of war is to more than these. It reaches beyond battlefield and bivouac to the hearthstones of the land. In the story of this young western Territory an unwritten tale of tragedy and endurance is to be found in the pioneer homes of early Kansas.

While the men were fortifying Lawrence and waiting for the hour of open warfare, down in the Vinland Valley events were transpiring that led to the sudden appearance of Patty Wren and Beth Lamond before Lawyer Merriford's office.

Nobody knew better than Isabel Darrow how much every man counted in the besieged town. Not only did she send her own away, with a bright hopeful face, she became also a comforter and helper to other women less brave and capable than herself. Mark jumped at the chance of being now the head of the household, and did the work of two men gladly, but too rashly; while in his boy-heart he cherished the notion that he too was needed at Lawrence, and he dreamed his day-dream of valiant deeds he might have done there.

But one evening in his hurried descent from his Darra-

rat, whither he had climbed to see if the fire of battle might be lurid in the north, he lost his hold and fell to the cabin floor below. A broken rib, a dislocated shoulder, and a twisted ankle were the net results, with some fifteen minutes of unconsciousness at the beginning. His mother deftly wrenched the shoulder into place, and bandaged the ankle; but the broken rib, the stiff arm, and the helpless foot required careful nursing, and upon her and little Joe fell all the outdoor winter chores besides. Mark was meeker under affliction than in good fortune, for he made no complaint of his sufferings, and in all possible ways saved his mother by taking care of himself; while Joe, suddenly promoted to the highest place in the household, used much energy and little judgment, as might be expected of one of his years.

That was how it was that in a sudden whirling about of the wind from south to north, as happens often on the unsubdued prairies, Joe was caught down in a ravine cutting wood without his coat. Warm and wet with perspiration from the vigorous exercise, he had come up to the level and hurried home against the chilling wind. The little body was numb with cold when the boy reached the house, and although his mother cared for him zealously, he went into a fever and within the next twenty-four hours pneumonia was added to the other cares of the brave pioneer woman.

Patty Wren, with her natural inclination to be into things, and to be useful as well, came over for an afternoon visit with Mrs. Darrow. Patty was a born nurse, and she saw at once that Joe was very ill. She would not alarm his mother. That was n't Patty's way, but she made up her mind that he must have medicine, and that Mrs. Darrow must be relieved of all other duties except the care of her children.

"Land o' love, Mis' Darrow," Patty chirped. "You go an' stay with them blessed boys. I'll git your house red up in no time," and the trim little woman fairly flew about the kitchen.

"Ef I had somebody to stay here I know what I'd do," she mused. "I believe I can do it, anyhow. Little Joe hain't goin' to pull through less he gits something to relieve his chist. You can bring up children most of the time on turpentine an' lard, but in pneumony you've got to have quinine inside of 'em. Mis' Darrow's doin' noble, but ef Joey don't git some help, inside of a week there'll be a grave over to Palmyry to rest heavy on her heart, and make her hate Kansas 'stid o' lovin' it as it will deserve yit. An' the men all locked up in Lawrence an' the key throwed into the Kaw, you might say. Oh Law! it's the women's turn now. An' it's a nasty day too, but ef ye wait to git consent of the weather you won't go fur in shine or shadow."

Patty glanced out at the dull gray sky and colorless earth. Then she peeped into the hall. Hiram Darrow had cut a wide doorway across the corner of one of the rooms, enlarging the space in the hall sitting room and giving more light and general comfort to both room and hall. Mark sat propped in a chair before the fire and Joe lay on a cot in the room beyond.

"Land o' love!" Patty repeated. "Isabel Darrow would look like a picture even in the poorhouse. Ain't no woman in Kansas quite so pretty. Poor little Joe! He hardly senses what a sweet face is bendin' over him. Even Beth Lamond, with all her pretty girl ways and kind o' wholesome independence, ain't got quite the beauty yit that the good Lord give Isabel Darrow. Lemme see, I'll get Beth to come an' stay and I'll just go to Lawrence after medicine. My nose told me there

was something wrong with Beth and the Darrows the day of the preachin' up to Palmyry. Elliot went home stiff an' upright, and Craig Penwin beaued Beth home. But in the hour of sorrer we forget our little miffs. I wish I could get her or somebody here by just wishin' it. But if you got no wishin' tree you must git your fruit from your action bushes, and here goes Coke Wren's wife to it."

As she opened the kitchen door to carry out a pan of dishwater little Tarleton Penwin came around the corner of the house.

"Bless your heart, boy, come in," Patty exclaimed joyfully. "Could n't you stay here awhile — till I get back or send somebody? Joe 's sick."

Tarley's lip quivered. In sheer loneliness he had come to find his playmate; and sickness is a hard problem for a boy.

"Oh, he 's just middlin' sick, and you can help his ma a lot. Will you do it?" Patty urged.

"Yes, Mrs. Wren, if I can," the boy answered, and he allowed Patty to lead him, hesitating, into the sick room.

"Mis' Darrow, Tarleton's come to stay with you till I get back. I 'm goin' to get you some medicine."

Mrs. Darrow's eyes were a joy to Patty's memory as she turned them gratefully upon her kind little neighbor.

"But how can you get it, Patty?" she asked. "All the Palmyra men are on their way to Lawrence now. I saw the company pass down the Trail half an hour or so ago."

"Say, Mis' Darrow, can you pull through till mornin'?" Patty asked eagerly.

Isabel lifted her fair face to the little woman bending over her.

"I know in whom I have trusted," she said simply.

"I'll be here to-morrow or send something or somebody. Tarley'll stay, won't you, Tarley?"

Tarley nodded.

"Aunt Crystal said maybe I could stay all night," he said. And Patty hurried away.

Cotton Mather's hard hoofs clicked on the frozen Trail as Patty sped toward the cabin on the edge of the ravine. At the crossing by the Hole in the Rock she almost dashed into Craig Penwin, whose horse had shied angrily away from the black pool.

"Why, Craig," she cried, seized with an inspiration, "I've just come from Darrow's. Mark's got a broken rib and a sprained ankle, and a shoulder out of place; most other ways though he's all right, but little Joe's got pneumony bad, and I'm goin' after medicine. Can't Tarley stay there till I get back? It's a hard time for all of us, Craig, no matter how single or double we look at things."

However harsh the lines were drawn now, neighbor against neighbor, Craig Penwin took no part in any of the strife. In his heart, however, he resented the very name of Darrow. But he was a gentleman. Lifting his hat to Patty, he said courteously:

"Of course Tarley can stay if Mrs. Darrow wants him. I'll go home and tell Aunt Crystal. Where are you going, Mrs. Wren?"

"Oh — home," Patty answered briefly, for she could not wholly trust Boniface Penwin's son.

Craig knew her thoughts, and he turned away in anger.

"I know where she is going. She might have told me. They will not think of me alone. They don't trust me because I believe the niggers were made to be our servants, and," sadly, "because of my father. But there's one who shall trust me. That's Beth, and no Darrow

shall prevent it. I'll show her, too, before twenty-four hours, that I am a man if I am a Southerner," and he shut his thin lips tightly and rode away.

Meanwhile Patty hurried home to set the little Wren's nest in order.

"Heavens to Betsey! of all the good luck," she cried as she reached the edge of the ravine. "There sets Beth Lamond on their big Pluto. Hain't Providence workin' it out though!"

"I've come to stay over night," Beth announced, when Patty reached the gate. "Mother has gone to Mrs. Nethercote's. The baby is sick, and Mother sent me and Pluto over here to eat you out of house and home till she gets back."

Mrs. Lamond, who had feared every sound in the days of imaginary evils, had grown courageous when real dangers threatened. To-day she was miles away, helping a mother with a sick baby — the same baby that Patty had cared for during the preaching service at Palmyra.

"Oh Beth, everybody most is sick," Patty said dolefully, but she could not be gloomy long. "You and me is all right though. Let's do something."

But to the little Yankee's plans Beth was deaf.

"Patty Wren, you shall not go to Lawrence alone," the girl declared. "Mrs. Darrow will get through the night somehow. You said Tarley can stay with her. I'm going with you."

"But what will your Ma say, Beth?" urged Patty.

"She isn't where she can say anything right now. She's helping the sick, and that's what I'm going to do."

"But I'm not afraid to go alone, really." Patty was giving in, for she was only a woman and the dangers of the frontier were very clear to all the women here.

Beth thought quickly.

"Patty, we can get to Abbott's place before it is very dark if we ride fast. Then we can get to Lawrence early in the morning. Nobody would stop us. Just two women, in the daylight, and we can get a doctor or medicine and be here again by to-morrow afternoon, if we hurry. Poor little Joe! and Mark so helpless. Oh Patty, it's awful the suffering all this brings, besides the danger to the men who defend the Territory," and the girl's face grew sad.

In a few minutes the two, with big Pluto and vicious little Cotton Mather, were speeding away to the northward.

In the same gray morning hour wherein White Turkey was rousing Winthrop Merriford from his slumbers, Beth and Patty were beginning the last lap of their journey. The growing darkness had tested their courage on the evening before. This morning they were buoyant and fearless. Although the way was rough and shaded in places, the light was growing and the day would be clear. They could not believe any danger could threaten them, although Mrs. Abbott was loath to have them go on alone.

"The woods and hollows are full of dangerous men," she warned them. "Be as careful as you can. I can only trust you to the Lord."

"Well, we're safer with Him than anybody else, Whig or Tory," Patty answered, half in reverence, half in jest, and the two rode away.

Elliot Darrow upon Mount Oread, watching the day dawn in the far southeast and noting how deep were the purple shadows of night about every ravine and spot of woodland, did not dream as he stood at sentinel duty above the town, how full of peril to one he loved, was one dark hollow away to the southward.

The crimson waves of sunrise were just pulsing through the tree-tops as Beth and Patty rode from the level plain into the dim twilight of a lonely thicket-filled ravine. The roadway was narrow and winding, leading down to the dry bed of a sometime stream of water. Beyond this point the road wound again by two or three turns to the open prairie. At the last turn, just at the bottom of the ravine where the bushes grew thickest, and the deep shade made darkness at this hour, Patty and Beth came suddenly upon two men who filled the way. Before the startled women had time to make a motion or outcry two other horsemen broke through the thicket behind them, closing the way of retreat, and crowding their horses alongside the women's. All four were heavily armed and with their coarse clothing and brutal unshaven faces they would have sent terror to stronger hearts than the hearts of these helpless women.

"Oh Lord," Patty gasped, folding her little hard hands imploringly, "if You don't work a miracle we're done for."

Beth's face was very white beneath its golden crown of hair, and her dark eyes burned with a strange glow. All the fighting blood of the old Clan Lamond thrilled her pulses then, and her voice was clear as she said:

"We are going after some medicine for a sick boy. Will you let us pass?"

The foremost rider of the two in front fell back before the strength of that voice, but his companion pushed forward against Pluto's shoulder.

"Let the little peewee go after the medicine. Shoo her on, boys. We won't bother her." He caught Patty's bridle as he spoke and gave her pony a forward jerk. "This is that Scotchman Lamond's girl. He was in the gang that held up Sheriff Jones and took Branson away

from us. Anybody belongin' to him or that Quaker abolitionist, Darrow, is ours."

"It's a pity they ain't none of 'em to be found to defend their own women. Now's our chance to get even," and with a brutal oath the man behind Beth crowded between her horse and Patty's.

"Maybe she'd give us each a kiss," the third horseman said, with an insulting grin, as he urged his horse forward beside the girl's.

Beth's firm white fist struck swift and hard straight into the ruffian's face with a force that told, for he jerked his horse back until it sat upon its haunches.

In the midst of the plunging and cursing that followed, the man who would have given up the attack closed in again behind the others when he saw his companions were not with him.

So every band of criminals has its one or more who do not dare either to fight or to run.

Patty's courage got its second hold with Beth's resistance and she whirled Cotton Mather about, crying:

"Turn 'round, Beth, we can get out this way."

But the horseman behind her lunged forward, separating the two entirely, as he cried out savagely:

"Now's the time to make old Lamond pay the cash. Close in, boys."

Beth's heart stood still, but her clutch on her bridle rein did not loosen, and she faced her tormentors with defiant eyes.

"Close in! Close in!" the others cried.

"Yes, close in! Into the woods as fast as you can, you devils!" And Craig Penwin on a roan horse, came crashing through the thicket into the road behind them.

The horsemen started at the sudden appearance, and he who had first fallen back slid to the edge of the brush

quickly. But the other three, seeing only one man, waited a moment.

"Who are you? There's only one; we can manage him," the foremost rider declared.

"Let these women alone and get out of sight this minute," Craig's voice rang out commandingly. "I'll fight all four of you if you don't, but there will be one dead man besides myself when we're done."

"That's Colonel Penwin's boy. We've got to run," one rider urged. "We'll get even with old Lamond yet, in spite of you," and with more mutterings the four slunk away from view around a bend in the bushes, while rescuer and rescued hastened on to town.

Craig Penwin did not wait long in Lawrence. While Beth and Patty were explaining the purpose of their coming he dismounted, and leading the black horse to its owner, with a courteous salute gave over its bridle rein.

"Here, Mr. Lamond," he said in a low tone, "It came my way to see that nothing should harm these two women." Then with a certain stiffening of form and dignity of manner, he added, "We Southerners are not all of the rabble type, like those over on the Wakarusa. You cannot even judge us by our fathers always. I would not lift my hand against a Free-State man in Kansas, unless I had other cause against him. Good morning, sir." And he was off.

"There's a fine boy. What a pity he's a Penwin," Lamond said to himself. "We get almost too bitter to be just ourselves in these days of unjust deeds."

Hiram Darrow's anxiety for his own son and his sense of duty struggled only briefly.

"I am only one of many here who are needed at home. I will trust that my family will be kept safe," he said to David Lamond.

"You are right, Darrow. Some of the men are ready to give up now. Colonel Lane has his hands full; they are all so uneasy. If you go they will complain, or call you a coward, or both, and we need you more than we do most men."

"I am going home, father," Elliot said. "I do not think Lawrence needs me as much as mother does."

Lamond looked curiously at him as he said this.

"All our wives and mothers need us, Elliot, but we need young men here."

"Is thee sure thee ought to go, Elliot? I have not felt a call to go away from here," his father said.

"I was warned by an Indian that I should go home, and I know I must. I'm going back with Beth. Mrs. Merriford wants Patty to stay here a few days. I'll come back again as soon as I can." Elliot spoke earnestly and with decision.

But the sturdy, practical Scotchman had little use for warnings and calls.

"Would you be as zealous to stay if an Indian warned you *not* to go?" He could not keep back the question.

Elliot's face flushed deeply. Then the color ebbed away, leaving it very white, while his dark eyes blazed with a steady light.

"If I thought only of myself, I might be," he answered quietly.

Had David Lamond known then of Pelathe's urgent pleading with the young Quaker he might have judged the boy differently. As it was he could not banish the belief that love of comfort, and personal cowardice, and a trace of foolish superstition were taking from Lawrence in her hour of peril one of the most trustworthy and promising boys, as well as one of the most capable in every position in which he had been tried. The

thought of it boded nothing good for Elliot's future, as it concerned the loyal-hearted Scotchman.

Beth could not leave her mother long and she was eager to get beyond the Wakarusa in midday. Patty had exploited their escape from the ruffians with unstinted praise for Beth's coolness, but the girl was now in a fever of excitement, and she longed for the shelter of the stone homestead in the Vinland Valley.

"My daughter," David Lamond said, as he took Beth aside for a good-by word, "take good care of mother, while I am doing my duty here, and, Lassie"—his voice was very tender—"Lassie, dearie, whatever happens to me, don't ever tie friendship with a coward. This world is n't big enough to hold the man who deserts his country for his own safety. Don't forget that."

He kissed her good-by, and Beth guessed only dimly at what he might mean.

The midday was beautiful, and while danger lurked in every sheltered draw, and the open plains but made them an easy target for the enemy, and while their need for speeding on their way was insistent, the two young people forgot again, as they had done before, that there was an unexplained misunderstanding between them.

"Elliot, are you really afraid to stay up there any longer? Papa says an Indian told you to go home." Beth put the question gently.

"Right now I 'm not afraid of anything. I am unarmed. It remains to be seen how brave I should be if I were in such a position as Craig was this morning."

"Oh, Craig was grand, but I can't bear to think of it, it was so awful," Beth shuddered. "Let 's not talk of that. Were you really warned to go home?"

"Yes," Elliot answered. "The message was plain."

"But Elliot, that seems so——"

"Cowardly?"

"No, not quite that," Beth hastened to say. "Only if somebody had said, 'Don't go. Your life is in danger if you do,' would n't you have felt like staying in Lawrence?"

"I was told that this morning," Elliot replied.

"Sure? I thought you said you were told to go." She look puzzled.

"Beth, a Shawnee Indian came up on Mount Oread after me this morning, and on the way down he warned me not to leave Lawrence. Less than three hours ago, White Turkey, the Delaware, who came to see your father last October, urged me to go home."

Beth's face was full of happiness, and the young Quaker remembered his own reflection of the early morning: "After all, I'm afraid I might be just as rude again." But a new feeling had crept into his being, a dignity Beth had never known in him before seemed to put a barrier about him.

"Then you are n't a coward, are you?"

"Did you think I would be?" he queried.

"Oh, I never thought you could be," she exclaimed, and for the first time she noted now strong was his hand holding the bridle rein.

"Then don't think it now," he said quietly, and they began to talk of other things.

"Don't come on," Beth said, as they reached the by-trail leading to her home.

"I must see that you are safe," he insisted, and they hurried up the way.

"Good-by. I'll be going back to Lawrence again if I can leave mother." Elliot took Beth's hand, and looked down into her eyes.

Somehow the daylight faded for the girl, and a moonlit

night came again with all its filmy veil of lights and shadows interwoven. And Elliot Darrow's white face, and dark eyes, and heavy dark hair shading his forehead, and the sweetness of love's first kiss, all swept up in memory, and with these the sense of indignation, and surprise, and sudden loneliness when he was gone.

And here was Elliot in the light of day. The same handsome face, the same magnetic attractiveness of a strong personality shorn of the dross of coarseness, dignified, lovable. The eyes were no less full of tenderness in that brief moment, but the mastery of manhood had usurped the pleading spirit of boyhood. A gentle pressure of the hand, warm, strong, with that fulness of meaning no word can express, and he was gone.

The day had been long for Isabel Darrow. She had sent Tarleton home in the early morning, and as the forenoon passed, Joe grew more restless, and Mark broke all law in his efforts to help his mother. The result was not even the easy chair for him, but two boys in bed instead of one.

Added to this, strange horsemen had gone back and forth on the Trail to-day. And once two horsemen had started toward the house, and then suddenly wheeled about, and ridden slowly away again. She fancied they resembled the men who had called to ask the way to Penwin's on the night of Branson's arrest.

Yet, Isabel was a woman of habitual poise of spirit, and when her hand and brain were wearied, and her heart heavy she repeated softly to herself the sweet old Bible promise:

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee."

Or a line of the beloved Quaker poet, Whittier, came to her lips:

Know well, my soul, God's hand controls
  Whate'er thou fearest;
Round him in calmest music rolls
  Whate'er thou hearest.

What to thee is shadow, to Him is day,
  And the end He knoweth,
And not on a blind and aimless way
  The spirit goeth.

As the long hours went slowly by, a sense of unrest, and of impending danger seized the Quaker mother, a longing for companionship, a nameless fear, and a craving for help, that would not be overcome. There are souls organized so finely that they respond to the throb of the great impending events that mark the pulse beats of a life story.

Late in the afternoon, the faint sound of a horse's hoofs brought Isabel to the front window. Three horsemen were riding slouchily down the Trail, evidently with no particular aim in their going. They turned to look up toward the Darrow home again and again, before they passed out of view. A great fear swept down upon the lone mother, and lifting her clasped hands, she prayed for protection in her defenceless hour. Then, sure of the All-Father's love, she turned bravely to her tasks again, with face serene, and soul courageous.

A cry from Mark, and the mother looked up to see Elliot standing in the hall doorway. Mother love has wonderful vision. In that moment Isabel saw more than her broad-shouldered first-born son smiling down upon her as he opened his arms to receive her. She saw that the boy who went away to defend a city had unconsciously grown to the stature of a man. In days so few in number they might almost be counted by their hours, with no great crisis in affairs or soul-stirring event to

bring it about, the call to arms, and the gathering of the hosts of the enemy had wrought the world-old miracle. She saw even further in that brief instant, so keen is mother love. Her vision took in a man of magnetic personality, and inherent power. What were the pride and joy of the queen regent when she sees her son on his coronation day crowned king of his realm, to the pride and joy of this pioneer mother whose princely son wore now in her eyes the crown of his young manhood, a realm wherein he might rule to power, and she prayed, and fondly believed, to wonderful usefulness. "Mothers have God's license" to such hope.

"Home on a furlough, mother. Father is well. Lawrence has n't fallen yet. Patty is at Merriford's and — Beth is safe at home." Did his voice deepen with the last item of news? It may only have seemed so.

"Oh, Elliot, my blessed boy, we are so glad to have thee here again."

And then, from weariness and sudden relaxation, Isabel sank down beside him.

"Thee shall rest a night and a day, dear. I'll take care of this hospital now. I'm loaded with medicine and directions from Doctor St. Felix, a new man just come to town. We'll have Joe doing sentinel duty up in the Darrarat by the time the Dogs of War get to this valley." And Elliot, cool-handed and strong, took possession of things.

He never said "You" to his mother. However much the Quaker children might use the language of the world to their brothers and sisters, they always remembered to say "Thee" to the father and mother.

The fire burned cheerily on the broad stone hearth. There was no other light in the house. Isabel was sleeping the sweet slumber of tired mind and muscle. Mark

had at last heard enough of the war on the Wakarusa and had also fallen asleep. Only Elliot with little Joe wrapped in a blanket on his lap sat in the soft light of the fireplace, rocking gently to and fro and seeing visions of heroic deeds.

Outside the south window, deep in the shadows of the night, three forms were concealed. Three faces peered cautiously in. Three right hands held murderous pistols, ready for instant use. They were the men who had been in Sheriff Jones' company on the night of the rescue of Branson, the men who had met Patty and Beth in the ravine beyond the Wakarusa in the early morning. They were half tipsy with drink then. The sudden failure of their infamous scheme had made them only more determined to get their revenge somewhere, they cared little where, so it was wreaked on an abolitionist, or his home, and loved ones. The coward among them, the soberest of the quartette, had fallen out of the gang to-day. The others, vengeful as they were, knew they did not dare now to molest one whom Boniface Penwin's son had protected, and the Lamond household was safe. But the unguarded Darrow home offered even better sport. Here they could loot, burn and kidnap as they chose. From Palmyra to Lawrence there were not men enough to resist the three in an open daylight encounter. How easy then at night to fall upon the one lone homestead and leave it a heap of ashes. So they reasoned, but they did not reason much, nor coherently. They were filled with the spirit of lawless warfare — the blood-lust only an evil cause can inflame.

And so the men had spied out the land in the early afternoon, and had their brutal purpose well fledged for full accomplishment, waiting only the hours of darkness for their time of execution.

In his haste to reach home Elliot had ridden straight across the prairie from Lamond's instead of following the trail. What might have happened to the unarmed boy had he taken the main road, did happen some hours later to an innocent unarmed man on his homeward way. As it was, the unexpected sight of a big manly fellow here had checked them temporarily. The hour grew late, but still Joe lay wakeful in his brother's arms, and both were unconscious of evil hands so near, of evil eyes watching their every motion.

"Sing to me, Ellie, I 'm lonely for some singing." Joe had seemed to draw strength with the coming of his strong, big brother, and for the first time since his illness was able to be out of bed. "Sing, Ellie, mother and Mark will think it 's angels — or a nightmare." Joe was never too sick to joke.

Outside the men watched eagerly with hatred in their hearts. They could not think of others of kinder natures than their own. They thought all men hated. They did not know what mercy means.

It was growing very cold without. Within, the warm glow of the wood fire fell on little Joe's thin face, and accented the white forehead and dark hair of the older brother. It was a tenderly sweet picture of a love those murderous men had never known or had lost with the lost years. A minute or two more and the game must begin.

"Sing, Ellie," Joe pleaded, cuddling down in Elliot's warm embrace.

Then, sweet and clear and strong, welling up with power, the man's voice was lifted in the rich melody of song. Even, harmonious, resonant, with a sympathy that was appealing, and a strength that was compelling, Elliot sang the grand old hymn:

There's a wideness in God's mercy
Like the wideness of the sea,
There's a kindness in his justice
That is more than liberty.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

Outside in the dark and cold three men stood motionless. Dreams of childhood days, of old home ties, of the better things of life, when their world was young and souls were innocent, swept the seared hearts and touched to old vibrations the toughened heart strings.

"My God! boys, I can't do it," the leader exclaimed as the singing ceased. "I can't. You may kill me if you want to. My mother sang that song when I was a boy like that little cuss I had my aim on just now."

A cold shiver, the bitterness of midnight, shook their limbs, and, baffled and dazed by a power they could not comprehend, they stared about them as if to find the men who had come hither an hour ago.

A neighing of horses tied down beyond the evergreens startled them. They could not tell what happened next. For when they did get their senses Elliot Darrow had come straight out to where they stood, and to their mumbled plea of being lost had led them inside.

By the warm fire, with kindly words, and a sense of human welcome, and fearless friendliness, they never knew how they managed to each tell the same story of being belated, and of homes to the east they were anxious to reach. They knew, indeed, that shelter and food were given where they had expected to make ruin and woe. They never knew, nor did their host dream,

until long afterward, that the prophecy of the Palmyra preacher was being fulfilled, that Elliot was winning a battle with the power of his voice.

CHAPTER XI

A WARLIKE PEACE

When he shows as seeking quarter, with paws like hands in prayer,
That is the time of peril—the time of the Truce of the Bear.
— Rudyard Kipling.

WHAT might have happened to Elliot Darrow had he taken the main Trail home from Lamond's instead of speeding straight across the uneven prairie to his father's house, the same did happen to an innocent man on his homeward way on that same afternoon. And a name hitherto unknown was fixed for immortality in the history of a young commonwealth.

The Wakarusa War was marked by all the stirring incident and terror, and suffering of warfare, but it had no battle in its record. The lull that followed these hostilities was checkered through with plunder and lawlessness and strife and bloodshed. And for these sturdy pioneers the Dove of Peace was a more fearful omen than the Dogs of War.

On the afternoon while Beth and Elliot were hurrying toward the Vinland Valley important events were taking place in the besieged town on the Kaw. The guards were still vigilant; the work of strengthening the fortified entrances, and the lines of defence on either side of Massachusetts Street, was pushed vigorously; the soldiers drilled steadily; and up on Mount Oread the sentinel kept watchful eyes for the threatening forces on the borders of the Wakarusa. The lack of cannon and am-

munition for defence against a merciless foe, and the knowledge that now the United States troops were authorized to join the Missouri militia against the besieged forces made the odds of war appalling.

Early in the afternoon, as Merriford with Lamond and Speer stood before Doctor Robinson's headquarters, a young man came out to mount his horse. He was unarmed, and his manner was that of a quiet gentleman attending to personal business.

"Where to, now, Barber?" inquired Merriford. "I hope you aren't going to desert us."

"No indeed," Lamond added. "We lost one good fellow to-day, got a little cold chill in his courage, I'm afraid."

"If you mean young Darrow," Barber answered, "you are making a mistake on courage. However, I'll be here early in the morning. I'm just going home for the night. My wife was so distressed when I left I thought I'd show her I'm all right. Good-by, I'll soon see you fellows again. Take care of Lawrence until I get back," and swinging into his saddle he rode away.

"Fine fellow that," Merriford said. "See how erect and firm he sits in his saddle."

"Do you know, Merriford," Lamond exclaimed, "I am continually wondering at the class of men a year and a half has brought to this frontier; scholarly, gentlemanly, earnest men. Take young Barber now——" Lamond looked after the horseman galloping easily away toward the edge of town. "What a future a State must have with young men like him."

At that instant, Barber, who had reached a turn in the street, looked back toward the three men, and waving his hand in farewell passed from sight.

"Good-by, God bless him." There were tears in the

lawyer's eyes. "Do you know, Lamond, I never see a young man like that without thinking of my own boy, Neil. I've not heard from him for weeks. How I wish he was here."

"You are a young looking man to have a grown-up son, Merriford," John Speer said, looking at the lawyer. "How old is he?"

"Neil is only twenty-two. Young Darrow makes me think of him every day. He's about the same build. They could almost be mistaken for each other in the dark. Neil is having a little affair of the heart now. Just the age to take things seriously, you know;" and the lawyer smiled.

A shout, a hallooing, and then a roar of voices called their attention. Down the street a crowd was gathering about a loaded wagon in front of the Eldridge House, and they hurried to join the company. Two men stood smiling triumphantly beside their team, answering the questions put by the eager crowd.

By cleverest stratagem and daring, a twelve-pound cannon in this wagon had been brought up from Westport carefully boxed, like a carriage packed for shipping, and hidden under innocent looking mattresses and other furniture.

"Yes, we saw plenty of men who would have killed us if they had known what we were up to," one man was saying. "At an ugly place in the road we asked a bunch of innocent bystanders to help push our wagon up the slippery bank out of the mud, and they fell to like good fellows, and sweated and tramped mud and swore at the roads, never dreaming they were pushing a cannon on toward Lawrence with every grunt. If they had known what was in the wagon there'd have been a wayside

tragedy to match up along with the murder of Dow and arrest of Branson."

"Darrow was right last night," John Speer declared, as he listened to the men. "It is a fair day for us. I hope Mrs. Woods and Mrs. Brown will get here soon and bring with them what they went to get. They left town early for a long drive to Mrs. Brown's father's place. They have taken fearful chances to-day, and their success is our salvation."

And this was true; for in the morning of this day, two Lawrence women, Margaret Wood and Lois Brown, had dared to go out for stores of ammunition concealed on a settler's claim many miles away. This journey promised only death to men if they should attempt it. For the women, had their purpose been discovered, the anger and cruelty of their foes can hardly be guessed at. Underneath every wall of men, upreared in firmness for a nation's defence, if we but dig deep enough, we shall find the foundation stones are courageous women's hearts. And these two women had taken all the chances of a lawless land, where human passions rioted in unrestraint that they might bring the sinews of war to the defence of a just cause.

Even as the editor was speaking a shout arose down Massachusetts Street toward the south, a cry caught up and repeated from house to house and fortified point to point.

Down the broad street, rolling in with the gathering crowd increasing as they passed, Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Wood came loaded with their precious stores of powder and lead. Doctor Robinson, with Colonel Lane and other leading men, hurried down the street to receive the two and to rejoice in their courageous feat.

At the Eldridge House a messenger awaited their

return. His message was brief, but it made the third moment of thanksgiving for this December afternoon.

"Governor Shannon will be here to-morrow and the end of the war may be in sight."

Then the hearts of the people, so cast down twenty-four hours before, rose to buoyancy again; a cannon for defence; ammunition for firearms; and the Governor coming to Lawrence to see for himself what had been reported to him as a gang of ruffians, knowing no law, resisting all civil authority, and deadly in their menace to the Territory. The sun went down behind Mount Oread, and the shadows of evening fell on the beleaguered town wherein hope and determination had risen anew in the hearts of men.

The sun went down beyond the rim of the prairie, and the evening shadows gathered about a far-away cabin. A lonely young wife looked out across the wide spaces and listened to the December winds sighing, and her spirit sent back an answering sigh. She had tried to be brave. All day she had kept her hands busy that she might not feel the burden of her loneliness and her anxiety for the safety of her loved one gone now to the defence of Lawrence. But when twilight came and she could only sit and think, her courage ebbed away. To-night she had been unusually heavy-hearted, so she tried to dream of happier things; to fancy her husband might even now be on his way home. He had promised to come at the first moment. Her face grew radiant with love as she thought she heard a horse's feet on the hard roadway. Surely he must be coming, for the sounds grew louder, and the horseman was making straight to her door. Oh, the happiness of meeting is so sweet, that the sorrow of parting is soon forgotten, and with a thrill of thankfulness and joy the young wife went forth think-

ing to greet her loved one. And the shadows of evening deepened into the duller tones of night.

Through the purple twilight of this December evening a courier came scurrying up from the southwest, rushing as the bearer of evil tidings must needs rush, with the message that shall wring men's hearts with grief and rage. Had he come to say that the men on the Wakarusa were moving upon Lawrence, it would have been nothing beyond expectation. But the news he bore was of a wanton assassination of a defenceless man unarmed passing peaceably on his homeward way. No cause for the act, no crime, no provocation in heated quarrel, no old grudge settled, but shot in the back by the leader of a band of Pro-Slavery men, he fell to his death. And the man who did the infamous deed rode on gaily to the Wakarusa camp, exulting in the declaration that he "had sent one damned abolitionist to his winter quarters."

The horse whose hoof-beats the lonely young wife had heard so joyfully bore a courier to that cabin door also with the message old as the story of Abel, but with no edge of its heart-breaking grief ever yet softened away. The message of a young life crushed out by the hand of a brother Cain.

Out on the desolate winter prairie young Barber lay white and still where he had fallen. "Sent to winter quarters!" Nay, sent to the land of eternal peace. Sent to a martyr's doom, and beyond that to a martyr's imperishable glory.

Tenderly the body was borne back to the town from which only a few hours before he had gone out so strong and hopeful, and the men who had last talked with him looked down upon him with dry eyes of unspeakable sorrow. Beautiful in death the young form lay, mute witness to the sacrifice that must be offered up before

the dream of liberty that men had cherished should become the law of the land, known and honored of all men.

Whether it was the silent influence of the martyred young pioneer so still in death, or a natural sense of justice, or a will too weak to resist the last wind that blows upon it, or a brain muddled with too much drink, the outcome of Governor Shannon's visit was a truce to hostilities and a disbanding of the forces on the Wakarusa. Not all the men in Lawrence were satisfied, however, for they saw no permanent gain in the temporary lull. They felt themselves no safer from attack, and the Territory in no wise more free from the invading lawless enemy, nor any stronger civil power to which they might appeal at home.

Volunteers who had just heard the call for aid in those slow-going days were coming in daily. Among these a wagon carrying five stalwart men rattled up Massachusetts street with the Stars and Stripes flying above it.

"Now who comes here so gallantly, I wonder?" Winthrop Merriford said, as he caught sight of this vehicle.

"That 's Mars'r John Brown, Mars'r Merriford," Jupe explained.

"Well, how do you know him, Jupe?" queried Merriford.

The negro hesitated a moment, then said so glibly that Merriford knew he was lying, "Oh, I knowed him down Souf — used to live in Georgia when I was a slave."

"He did? Is he a Pro-Slavery man?"

"'Fore God Almighty, no, sah," Jupe fairly thundered back. "He 's the worstest slave-hatin' man ever come out of New York, sah."

"Thought you said he came from Georgia," Merriford said, dryly.

"Makes no difference where he come from. It 's where a man 's gwine to what counts here in Kansas. Don't pay to ask too close 'bout none of us, 'cause we had such sundry and divers reasons for comin', 'specially divers. Ef we had n't div and come to the top more 'n onct some of us 'd never a got here," and Jupe grinned broadly.

"I guess you are right, Jupe. It makes little difference where we come from so we stand up solidly here and keep our balance. Hold that in mind yourself, and run, now, and call this man Brown in here. I want to know him."

By the next night the terms of peace were established. The Free-State men were allowed to keep their arms, which had been at first demanded of them, and the right to organize a militia was granted. Whether the men of Lawrence or the men in Sheriff Jones' camp despised Governor Shannon most, it were hard to say.

With the conclusion of the treaty the forces on the Wakarusa were ordered to disperse. Followed then a wild rout for the Eastern border. And the disorganized, angry, disappointed horde swept the country, raiding as they went. Or, intrenching themselves in friendly quarters, this outlaw pack in little bands scourged the settlements, filling the settlers' homes with fear.

On the evening of this day of treaty a terrific storm of wind and sleet, fit token of a warlike peace, fell upon the earth with blinding fury. Inside of Merriford's office, snug away from the storm without, the terms of the peace treaty were riddled through with heated words. David Lamond and Hiram Darrow, Lawyer Merriford and John Speer, with others of smaller influence, made up the company with John Brown, Jupe's "worstest hater of slavery," who had come up the day before with the flag of our country flying above his wagon.

"I tell you, gentlemen, Colonel Lane and Doctor Robinson don't represent me when they argue this policy of conciliation. There is only one way to settle this business, and that is to fight it out. No stay of execution is going to prevent the final fall of the ax." Lamond stood up before the company and his face was earnest with determination.

"That's what all the hot-headed fellows are saying down on the intrenchments," Merriford returned. "I believe, however, it is wise to settle this thing peaceably now. We do not belittle ourselves. We are defending, not attacking. We keep our arms. The Governor allows us to organize a militia. The outsiders go back home with nothing to boast of but two weeks of camping out, with disagreeable weather and hardly the necessities of life. We cannot win this thing in a day, Lamond, nor by one battle."

"I agree with you," Hiram Darrow added. "Every treaty of peace is a degree of power. The real battle is not on the field but in the souls of men, and there, too, is the final real victory."

"Neither was the cross on Calvary but in Gethsemane," John Brown exclaimed, "but the form and sign of Calvary have ruled the race for eighteen centuries. I tell you, gentlemen, we have gained nothing, but wasted time." In the dim light of the office lamp Brown's face looked stern, and his eyes were burning with a strange glow. "Lamond is right," he went on. "You will not see happiness growing out of this peace, but sorrow and anguish until the hour when the crimes of the land are avenged."

"You are to be at the head of the militia, aren't you, Brown?" Merriford asked. "You will have some power to act. I know this is a time of truce — nothing more.

But the winter is no time to leave women and children alone. It is only merciful to our own to rest on our arms awhile."

"Still," Speer broke in, "one battle might have ended the whole matter, or at least one short campaign could have done it. I believe in finishing a work once begun, and since the only way under heaven to reach the end of this thing is to strike and strike hard, it might better have been now than later. I hate to see fortifications lying around waiting to be used. I want them plowed down and set to garden truck, and our spears used for 'pruning hooks.'"

"They will not grow potatoes when we plow them with cannon ball," Darrow offered.

"No, no," Lamond exclaimed, "maybe not; but we sow dragon's teeth with our string beans to spring up armed men. And that 's the crop that this summer will sow."

"I agree with you," John Brown said, thoughtfully. "If it is a question of swift war, or organizing lingering peace and disgrace, give me war," and with these words the company separated.

"Listen to the storm, Jupe; are you sure everything is closed up for the night?" Merriford asked, as he entered his own door.

"Close as I could make. Hit 's an awful night," Jupe answered.

"Yes, I pity the settlers in the cold little, unchinked cabins out on the prairies to-night. Heavens! What a sacrifice men and women make to win a land to freedom," Merriford mused.

"Yes, sah. Only the mens, they sacrifice for the country, and the womens they sacrifice for the mens, seems to me," Jupe philosophized.

"Jupe, I'd feel bad even to have a grave of one I loved under this beating storm. Poor Mrs. Barber!"

Jupe's face was pitiful to see as he turned his pleading eyes on his employer.

"Lord A'mighty keep you from ever havin'—or ever knowin'," he added under his breath, and with a deep sigh he turned away.

CHAPTER XII

THE STORM

I have read in the marvelous heart of man,
That strange and mystic scroll,
That an army of phantoms vast and wan
Beleaguer the human soul.

—Longfellow.

THE fury of the storm increased. Out in the open country it hammered mercilessly on the flat, resistless, grassy plains. It wrenched in wrath at every tree and shrub. It screamed in anger down every open draw and shaded ravine. It hurled its violent rage upon every human habitation, and the shelter built by human hands for dumb animals. Many a stable-shack lost its roof or door or tumbled in a heap about its occupants. While through unchinked walls and about flimsy doors and window casings of the cabin home it sent its swift sword-like tongues of bitter, penetrating chill.

In the Vinland Valley the sweep of the winds was unchecked, and the wooded headland stood out boldly to meet its fury, while down the winding way of the old Santa Fé Trail the dead leaves swirled in eddies upon the floor of the sheltered nooks under overhanging shelves. The Hole in the Rock, with its partial coating of black ice, seemed never so cruel as now, with its thin, treacherous covering above the bitterly chill waters.

The Darrow home, although on the top of the swell, was sheltered about with cedar trees. Its odd arrangement of rooms and halls had been accidental in the build-

ing, and as it was only a temporary structure, comfort was considered more than anything else in this winter time. The little arms of hallways furnished storerooms for wood and water, and with curtains and heavy paper linings the low-roofed house was snug and warm.

"We 'll have a fine home here some day," Hiram Darrow had said, "built after the colonial pattern, and we shall forget this little cabin and its discomforts."

"I hope not entirely," his wife replied. "We shall be happier for the memory of it."

"I 'll build a Darrarat on the new house, too," Mark declared. "I 'm bound to see what 's goin' on."

With the breaking of the storm, a Palmyra man, coming in from Lawrence, had brought the word of the treaty of peace. But Isabel was a wise woman and she had some notion of what lawlessness would follow in the wake of such a treaty. She had no fear for her husband, for he walked fearlessly through all his days. But she was glad her boys were all at home on this wild night.

"Mother, I 'm going to see how the Lamonds are tonight," Elliot announced at the supper table. "I have everything shut in, the hallway back here is full of wood, and there is water enough in the buckets and tubs to float a ship."

"Thoughtful son!" Mark declared. "Ellie could earn his way going out as a hired girl, 'most anywhere."

"I would try to stand on my feet and not on my head when I was helping the women folks," Elliot answered, with a glance at Mark's bandaged foot.

"Yes, and not come downstairs on my shoulders, neither," Joe chirped up, feebly.

"There you go, all of you, beating up a battered old veteran of the War of 1812, when he can't help hisself. May you live to repent it, gentlemen. May you live to

repent it! Oh, my!" and Mark sighed in mock resignation of spirit.

Isabel Darrow only smiled at all this. The boys had teased one another from babyhood, and their sense of humor lightened the harsh way of frontier living. But as the wind roared angrily among the cedars outside, she said:

"It seems dreadfully rough out. I wish thee might stay here. But still the Lamonds might need thee."

"Yes, Mrs. Lamond needs him bad. It's not so important about Beth, but Elliot can't let the elders suffer. Count on him."

"No, no," Joe said, demurely. "Elliot would wade any snowdrift for Mrs. Lamond."

"Seems to me it's the Revolutionary War veteran getting it now," Elliot said, with a smile. "Look out, Josephus. It's the Mexican War soldier's turn next."

"Going to walk or ride?" Mark inquired as Elliot started toward the door.

"Ride, my boy, ride. I'll slip the white palfrey into Lamonds' stable while I am there. I would never leave a horse out in the shelter of a lariat pin on a night like this, but neither do I consider a horse better than myself, to stand in a warm stable while I walk against the wind. You need to learn balance, Marcus."

"Say, Ellie, come here," and Mark motioned to him to stoop down. Then in a low tone he said: "Could you possibly go to Penwin's, too? Tarley was here yesterday and told Joe that Old Bonny — excuse me, I mean Colonel Penwin — had sent for Craig to go up to Lawrence or the Wakarusa or somewhere, and they won't be back for three days. Now it's Saturday night, and I'm afraid they might need something."

"Good boy," Elliot said, looking down on Mark with

kindly eyes. "Yes, I'll go. I expect Tarleton needs me bad," and Elliot dodged out of the door just in time to miss Mark's improvised crutch.

A few minutes later they heard his clear voice singing some sweet old song as he went bravely forth against the storm.

Isabel pressed her face against the window pane just in time to catch a glimpse of the white horse and the young rider with his white face outlined by dark hair. Then the black night swallowed them and the wind whirled the sleet at her from beyond the window. A sense of dread and loneliness seized her, and she longed to rush after her boy. Then in the silence of her soul she lifted her hands to Him in whom she trusted.

"A thousand shall fall at his side and ten thousand at his right hand, but it shall not come nigh him," she murmured.

Out in the night Elliot went singing on his way. The young form had grown sturdier each day since his coming to Kansas, and the vigor of a man nerved his arm to strength.

"I'll go to Penwins' first," he said to himself. "It's a fight against the wind coming back, but"—he smiled in the dark—"there's something to come back for, maybe," and he galloped merrily with the wind toward the South.

"Oh, Elliot Darrow," Lucy cried when she saw who stood at the door. "I thought I heard papa coming home. It must have been you I heard. It's so good of you to come."

And Elliot with neighborly courtesy did sundry little undone chores for the household. Then he tightened up the windows and barred out the storm before taking leave. As he stood in the light of the open door, where Lucy

would persist in coming to thank him in her girlish enthusiasm, one might travel far before finding a young man upon whom Nature had smiled more graciously.

"Stay all night," Lucy urged. "It's too bad to try to go north against this wind."

"Oh, I'm not afraid of it," Elliot declared.

"Elliot isn't afraid of anything, are you?" Tarleton said.

"Well, not of the wind, at least," he answered, smiling genially, as he closed the door, shutting them inside.

Then he mounted his horse and was off again. The darkness concealed him the moment the door was closed. That was why a horseman coming in from the northwest saw only the young man in the light of the doorway, and, following stealthily at a distance, did not know that Elliot was on horseback and had gained space ahead beyond his reckoning. And Elliot forged onward, unconscious that any other human being was abroad on the prairies in this fierce storm. In the shadow of the wood, where the night was very black, a man slipped from out of the blank depths and fell into the Trail behind him. Steadily as he urged his horse against the wind the silent footman followed. They had almost reached the edge of the wood on the height overlooking the Vinland Valley when Elliot, whose keen eyes saw far into the darkness, caught the landmark of the by-trail leading out of the wood toward Lamond's claim, and deftly wheeling his horse aside he galloped off toward the sheltered nook hidden from the main highway.

The lone footman, unconscious for the time that the horseman had left the Trail, pressed on his way, coming to the open space at the edge of the bluff. Behind him a man on horseback was hurrying cautiously along. Away down in the open the young Quaker was bending

to the sharp north breeze, with ears muffled against the stinging cold and sleet. The wind lulled to rest a moment, the storm cloud broke in two, and in the dim light the Vinland Valley lay bleak and bare. An angry storm lash struck the earth again, and the cloud fused together, but in the moment between, Elliot caught a faint sound like a pistol shot behind him, too faint to remember in the roar of the wind following it. And in a few minutes more he had reached the stone cabin in the deep valley.

Beth had on the same red dress she had worn on the rainy night in October when Craig Penwin had found her alone and lonely. With all the raging madness outside, and with this cosy hearthstone with a comely matron and fair-faced girl beside it, what wonder that to Elliot Darrow it should seem the crown of life's good things.

"Talk about heaven when you can get into a place like this," he exclaimed, as he settled into David Lamond's chair by the fire. "I've been clear to Penwins' since I left home. The wind is a fright coming north."

"To Penwins'!" Beth said, wonderingly. "What took you there?"

"Oh, they are left without any men to help them, like most of the settlers' homes to-night. Only"—Elliot's voice had something stern in it—"they aren't out to save the country. They don't serve at that. The Colonel is upon the Wakarusa and he's sent for Craig. That's why——"

"Why you are playing the guardian angel to all this deserted village." There was a little harsh ring to Beth's voice.

"Oh, Elizabeth Lamond," her mother exclaimed. "I'm always glad to see Elliot. It was so kind of you to face this storm just to see if we were safe. I've been awake

for two nights with Nethercotes' sick baby. I'm going to bed now. I can sleep with comfort."

"Thank you, Mrs. Lamond," Elliot said. "I came especially on your account. I hope you will rest well. Good night."

When her mother was gone Elliot sat looking into the fire until Beth said:

"I am as grateful as mother is to you. But I don't want you to misjudge Craig. You know what he did for me."

"Yes, I know. I'm glad he did it."

"Well, why do you say he's upon the Wakarusa?"

"I didn't say he was there. I said he was sent for. I don't know where he is. He's not at home; I know that."

"I know where he is," Beth said, spiritedly. "He's in Lawrence. Father sent a letter down by a Palmyra man this afternoon. You'd never guess what he said."

"Probably not. I'm not real swift at those things," Elliot said.

Something seemed to set things wrong to-night, but neither one had the clue to the cause as yet, because they were young and had not yet learned how to study motives that lie back of speech.

"I've a notion not to tell you what papa said," Beth said, pettishly.

"It probably doesn't concern me anyhow," Elliot retorted.

"Oh, yes, it does. No, it doesn't, either," and Beth's cheeks grew pink.

"Then I'll have to know," Elliot said, firmly. "Whatever does and does not concern me in the same sentence is worth knowing."

"It isn't about you at all," Beth said daringly. "He

says I'm never to forget Craig's kindness." Elliot looked steadily into the fire. "And he says there's to be a peace party Monday night, and I am to go up to Lawrence and be one of the guests. Everybody will bury the hatchet. Just think, Governor Shannon and Sheriff Jones will be there ——"

"And the man who killed Barber?" Elliot asked, without looking up.

"Oh, Elliot Darrow, you are awful."

"No," answered Elliot, "that man was awful. What else?"

"Father said Craig Penwin would be there, and he wants me to go up to the party too, maybe. Anyhow, the letter said Craig and I could represent the peace conditions between the two forces. We are good types, for if I were a man I'd have been up on Mount Oread doing sentinel duty for Lawrence, and Craig is a regular Southerner, only he is manly and just."

"As many of them are, I have no doubt," Elliot said. "We have the wrong streak of them sent in here, is all. What else?"

"Father says Craig will think I owe it to him to recognize his courage. What do you think?"

"I think," Elliot answered, "that if I had saved a girl from insult I would feel like I had only done my duty, and that she owed me nothing. To be honest about it, Beth, I don't believe Craig would expect any more than that, either. What else did your father say?"

"It seems," Beth's voice was not quite steady, "that I am to go to this peace party with Craig anyhow."

"Does that concern me?" Elliot asked, still with his gaze on the coals.

Beth did not reply.

He lifted his eyes and looked at her. She returned his

gaze steadily. Her deep gray eyes were unfathomable at this moment. At last she said:

"Will you go to this party?"

"I think I will," he answered. "I'm fond of peace. We Quakers all are."

"Oh, Elliot!" and Beth leaned forward with her hand shading her eyes.

"I must be going now. I think I ought to see if Patty Wren is all right. Think of that gritty little bird staying all alone in her cabin." Elliot rose to go.

"I'm not sure she is at home yet, Elliot, and it is a long, cold ride if she should not be there; but if she is, it will be good of you to look after her."

"Yes, I'm a useful sort of a watchdog," he said, gaily, reaching for his cap. "I gave up my job on Mount Oread to look after the women and children down here. Kind of a squaw-man."

Beth was standing beside him now, watching him button his coat up tightly.

"Elliot, you are not like the boy who went nutting with me last October," she said, gently.

He looked down on her with the look a true-hearted man, in all the years of his life, gives to only one woman. But Beth was not looking at him just then.

"I told you, Beth," he said, in a deep but gentle tone, "that I should change more, maybe, than any of the others after that day — that night," tenderly he pronounced the last two words. "I am not a rude fellow at heart, Beth. I have wanted to tell you I had no right to do what I did."

Her head had dropped low and her hands were clutching the back of the chair by which she stood. The warm red gown, fitting up to the white throat, the soft folds of her golden hair, and the pretty pink bloom of her fair

cheeks, with the innate beauty of her sweet-souled young womanhood, made her marvelously dear and beautiful to the young man beside her.

"Beth," he rested one hand softly on her shoulder, and with the other he gently lifted her face till her eyes met his. "I had no right to kiss you. Forgive me, won't you?"

"You had no right to tell Craig you did," Beth answered quickly.

"I did n't," Elliot spoke as quickly.

"He said you did."

"He lied." Elliot's cheeks flushed and his eyes blazed. Beth had never seen him look as he did now, and her admiration startled her.

"Elliot, let 's forget it all. Wipe it out and begin again," she said, gently.

"You are good to say it, Beth. May I say just one thing?"

She smiled up at him, and the hand on her shoulder trembled a little.

"Your father is grateful to Craig for what he did for you and Patty. So am I. But Mr. Lamond thinks I am a coward. I do not know whether I am a coward or not, but I hope always to have the courage to do the thing I think is right, even in the face of ridicule. That 's my idea of courage."

The fair face with the luminous gray eyes and sunny ripples of hair, young and winsomely charming, wore now a grace Elliot had never seen in it before, — the grace of earnest womanhood. With a gentle touch he smoothed the fair hair from her forehead. She looked up at him and neither spoke a word. If David Lamond, who loved his daughter supremely, could have seen her to-night with the broad-shouldered young man standing be-

side her, if he could have seen the dark eyes of Elliot Darrow looking with reverence and tenderness upon her, if he could have noted the strength of character that lay in promise in every line of that handsome young face, and if he could have heard the magnetic voice saying: "I do not know yet whether I am a coward or not. I hope always to have the courage to do the thing I think is right, even in the face of ridicule"—if all this could have been, there would have been a different story to tell in the pages that follow.

The firelight shown with a roseate glow making even the shadows seem cosy and warm. And in the heart of the rich light, Beth, in her dark crimson dress, with her youth and health and beauty, and beside her, Elliot, strong, capable, fearless. What were simple stone cabin home and hardy frontier life to this young Scotch lassie, with the sweetness and strength of her womanhood that marks the rank of peerage in this prairie kingdom! And what were storm and danger to this young State builder with the power to make empires in his strong right arm! If David Lamond could have only seen! But he was in Lawrence now.

A moment the two stood silently together. Elliot's right hand on Beth's shoulder, his left hand pushing back the yellow ripples from her white forehead. Then the warm snug room gave place to the darkness and the storm, and the young Quaker was away.

Patty Wren was safe and warm as a cocoon in its silken web, so Elliot faced eastward for the home run. As he came to the Trail crossing in the ravine by the Hole in the Rock he remembered how Cotton Mather had treated Coke Wren.

"I don't care to get thrown out here to-night to freeze

to death," he said, as he held the white horse down to a gentle gait.

He did not note how noiselessly he went along until he had reached the still, cold, black pool. The storm cloud broke here once more and a weird light poured through the leafless boughs into the ravine. It fell upon Elliot's dark form mounted on the quiet white horse. His white face and dark eyes were cameo clear against the black shade beyond, as horse and man moved silently as a spectre down the Trail. The horse's feet struck the ice of the ford. A startled cry rising to a shriek chilled the blood in his veins, and he clutched his bridle rein involuntarily. Had David Lamond seen him here at that moment there would never have been further question with him as to the young Quaker's courage.

Elliot uttered no sound, but with a quick mastery of himself, he turned to gaze after a horseman flying from him as from the face of doom.

"Does Boniface Penwin take me for the figure of Death riding on a pale steed this stormy night?" he thought to himself. "What else could make him ride from me like a mad man? I wonder if he will go to the peace party, too. He needs it."

As he hurried up the Trail winding along under the shelving rock of the wooded bluff he heard a faint groan. He stopped to listen. The wind was not so fierce here, and the way was warmer in these shut-in places. Also it was black, impenetrably black.

"Here's where horse sense comes in," the young man said, as he gave his own steed free rein to pick its way.

Another groan, louder this time, and another. Then a faint "Help! help!" It came from the roadside under the overhanging rock.

"What's the trouble?" Elliot called. He was not

cowardly here, where there was ample cause to fear. "Can I help you?" he called again.

"You, Darrow?" came the query.

"Yes. Who are you?"

"White Turkey. Come." Feebly the words were spoken.

Elliot was groping beside him in a moment.

"You are hurt. What's the matter?" he asked the Indian.

"I'm shot. Somebody behind me up there on the bluff. I'm cold."

Elliot helped the Indian to rise, but he could not stand alone.

"I'll set you on the horse and take you home with me," he said. "We'll see what we can do for you. How did you happen to be away down here this stormy night?"

"To save a life," White Turkey replied, and fell limp and half conscious against the horse's saddle.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PEACE PARTY

> And bright the lamps shone o'er
> Fair women and brave men.
>
> — Byron.

MORE than one home was in disorder on the night of the "peace party" in Lawrence. Homes were small in this early time on the frontier, and space was at a premium. Party dresses were in the bottom trunks under stacked-up possessions. Pretty headgear and other appurtenances of adornment were in the top band-boxes on the top of the heap above cupboards and on overhead shelves. These receptacles, brought out and left open for the brief time, littered the rooms.

"Law, law, Mis' Merriford," Jupe said, as he came grinning into the house. "I 'se done been totin' baskets *an'* baskets of good things to the Eldridge House,—pie, an' poun' cake, an' fruit tarts, 'til my eyes even ain't got no appetite no more. Everybody's gwine to be at that party to-night, an' they shore do calculate to eat a lot."

"Yes, we 'll do the subject justice in peace as in war. There will be well-dressed people, too, beside being well-fed," Mrs. Merriford said.

"Well-dressed!" Jupe exclaimed. "Lord A'mighty, won't they now? I never knowed before that they was such finery in these here little houses. I see more boxes layin' open that had been hauled out from under beds, an' I see more fine dresses layin' round on chairs an' hats

on the bureau or the parlor stove, an' I see finery hanging on the towel rack in the kitchen."

"Well, you see, Jupe," Mrs. Merriford said, laughing, "We are so crowded here. Plenty of land but house-room limited; we have to stow things in funny places."

"Now, jest don't you?" Jupe replied. "One lady kep' her lace shawl an' her beads an' a lot of finery in a big stone jar under the kitchen table, an' another had her velvet hat and her husband's velvet vest in the tin cupboard. Said they had n't nothin' much to eat anyhow. Et what they got before it had time to be put in the tin safe; said they done forgot how cold vittle tasted 'cause what they got they et up hot. Oh, golly! golly!" and Jupe giggled joyously.

"She's told the truth, I dare say, Jupe. Now go in the bedroom and get that tall bandbox off the shelf over Mr. Merriford's bed. Open it and bring me my white gloves and the lace collars for Annie and Nellie, and Mr. Merriford's silk hat. We also economize on space."

Jupe went away, grinning. When he reappeared, his face had lost its glow, and his eyes were full of a strange light.

"Mis' Merriford," he said, in a low voice, "whose picture was that in there?"

"Where? Oh, in the box? A woman with a baby in her arms? That was Mr. Merriford's first wife, Neil's mother. He had it taken with Neil just the day before she died. You see, Neil was only a tiny baby then. He looks like his mother; don't you think he does?"

The Negro stared at her but said nothing. Mrs. Merriford could not understand his strange mood.

"Did you think it was one of those pictures taken after death? Neil's mother was ill, but she was happy that day; she thought she was going to get well. Do you

know, Jupe," thinking to change the subject, "do you know, I think that young Mr. Darrow looks like our Neil, only younger, of course. Not a close resemblance, but at a distance they might be mistaken for each other. Do you know this young man when you see him?"

"Lord, Lord, no," Jupe answered in a low tone, and under his breath he added, "I hopes I never will. I hopes I never will."

But, however crowded for room the houses might be, with the shortage of cedar chests and ample closets and spacious bureaus, and chiffoniers, the toilets of the guests at the peace party gave little token of a frontier people outlawed from social appointments and refinement.

The party was given in the partially completed Eldridge House, and no pains were spared in producing a real social function with every courtesy and token of good will and peace. Something, too, there was of glad reaction from the tension of the last three weeks, when anger and suffering and threatening peril possessed the land. The leading men of Lawrence were the hosts, and everybody of importance became guests. Pro-Slavery and Free-State men, rich and poor, cultured and commonplace, old and young,—there were no lines drawn.

Jupe afterwards declared, "The only thing that kept the affair from bein' real hash was that they mixed in everything but the Indians and the darkeys. And yit," he philosophized, "the real peaceablest folks on the Kaw is them Delawares over north and us few colored aristocrats on this side, sah."

The Wrens were on hand early, for they were eminently gregarious birds. Coke wore a boiled shirt and a stiff little black and white bow tie; while Patty looked ever so neat in her brown alpaca gown with collar and cuffs of tatting, cloverleaf pattern, made out of number

eighty thread and "hooked" together with a crochet hook. Patty's brown hair was smooth and trim as a wren's feathers, and with her bright eyes and kind little face she was far from being the least important figure in that company. For inborn kindness and good will, together with a lively interest in the world as it moves along, and a keen sense of humor, make desirable companionship always.

"Heavens to Betsey! Cokey, dear, do look a-comin'!" Patty ejaculated as the guests streamed in. "They's about eight hundred invited, an' they must be eight thousand by this time, an' more on the stairs. I didn't know they was this many folks in the world."

She was sitting on the top of a table, for better viewing facilities, and her eyes fairly sparkled as she noted the ingathering crowd.

"Are you uneasy about the partakin's, Patty?" Coke asked. "Don't worry. I seen a man with a wooden leg. He won't need so much to eat; an' they's several more or less wooden-headed ones."

"Oh, Coke Wren! they's food enough for a whole Valley Forge to founder on. Beats the world the way these Kansas people do things. Pile up a wad of earthworks an' stick up a sign, 'Come over here an' git shot,' on top of it an' set down beside it to watch one day; an' the next day, smash down the earthworks, an' use the sign for firewood to cook an' bake, an' feed the same parties as hereinbefore referred to."

"No, Patty, they leave the sign up, but they add to it, 'or behave yourself, an' git fed.' There's Sheriff Jones. See him swagger."

"An' ef there ain't Beth Lamond and Craig Penwin. My land o' love, but don't they look fine? An' Colonel Boniface Penwin! Ef that ain't the wolf dwellin' with the

lamb an' the leopard with the kid, I'll go an' change the spots on the leopard, what the Good Book says he can't change hisself."

"I should n't think you'd say a word about Craig, Patty," Coke said, reproachfully.

"I ain't, Cokey, I ain't. He's a fine man, and I'll hear his 'Into the woods, you devils,' like he shouted to them rascals in the ravine, till the day of my death. It's Colonel Boniface hisself I'm lookin' at. Fine lookin' as ever walked the Lord's footstool. An' how proud he looks at Craig. But 'tween us two Wrens, that man's a walking shell of manhood. The real man's been eat out somehow. He's a-wearin' a lion's hide over a craven's heart, or else the Good Bein' give me the wrong kind of eyes. They're no use to me ef they don't let me see true."

Other eyes than the Wrens' were looking at Craig and Beth as they passed down the room, for they were worth a second look. There were mothers with little children, and there were not a few young brides in the Territory, but of young ladies it had not yet a plethora. Moreover, it was Beth's first real party, and the debutante is always interesting. But mostly and supremely was Beth in herself delightful that night. The excitement of the hour set the pink bloom on her cheeks and drew the sharp line between that and the white of her brow and throat. Her dress was of soft silk of the Lamond plaid colors, gray, green and deep blue, with the silver thread checking it, but all toned down to harmony and wonderfully becoming to her blond beauty. In her hair and at her throat little pink velvet bows nestled. Her sleeves reached just below her elbows, and a fall of lace revealed her plump arms. She wore no jewelry, except a string of pink coral beads.

Craig held his head high, with the air of a young man who had secured the best of what life was to offer.

In the whole company, the most distinguished looking man was the Southern gentleman, Boniface Penwin. Genial, well-bred, and well-dressed, he made the company forget its prejudice against him in spite of itself.

"That's David Lamond's girl, Emily," Winthrop Merriford said to his wife. "She's a beauty. Looks like her sturdy father, too. He's a man of a thousand, with all the good traits of the loyal Scotch people. Unprejudiced, too, or his daughter wouldn't be here with Colonel Penwin's son. Lamond is square and true."

"Since he rescued Miss Lamond with Patty from the ruffians, I should think she owed him something," Mrs. Merriford said.

"Yes, something." Lawyer Merriford was a shrewd man. "But if it's going to grow as an obligation along certain lines, Lamond will better think twice about it, before he lays too much on the girl's conscience in that respect."

"Well, they seem satisfied, so we need not be disturbed," Mrs. Merriford offered.

"Don't you know it's a lawyer's business to be disturbed?" her husband asked, jokingly. "And if it is going to tangle things up and make family tragedies when the fighting begins again, it would be best to be disturbed now."

"Will there be fighting again? I thought this was to be the peace-offering to-night." Mrs. Merriford spoke seriously.

"Of course there will, Emily. There's nothing settled. Nothing safe. This is only a truce. We get ourselves into better trim and we can fight the weather for our families this winter. The spring will thaw the snake

we've scotched, not killed. 'She'll close and be herself again,' as Shakespeare says."

The commotion of getting seated and ready for the speech-making followed.

"Right this way, Darrow. Plenty of seats here," John Speer called as a crowd of newcomers entered the door. "Right down here. We are waiting for you," he added, jovially.

The crowd turned to see Elliot Darrow and a petite stylish girl who must needs take Speer's proffered courtesy.

There are those who make their presence felt as soon as they enter a room, although no word may be said. Elliot Darrow walked easily down the long room, not with the manner of the polished gentleman, but with the innate simplicity and the attractiveness of the man who is not thinking of himself. Beside him was a young lady, well-dressed and, for her type, handsome. She was short and slender with an abundance of black hair and large dark eyes. Her eyelashes were long, and with her heavy brows made her face a striking one. She wore a dress of some light blue wool, braided daintily with black silken cord, and in her raven hair was a bunch of blue velvet forget-me-nots.

The crowd had settled just enough for the two to attract its gaze, if indeed they would not have done so anyhow. And as they were shown to a place of prominence, a murmur of interested comment ran through the company.

"I want to know. Ain't the boy good looking!" Coke Wren exclaimed, loud enough to be heard by Beth and Craig, who sat just in front of them. "Ain't we proud of our part of the company, Beth?" Coke whispered, leaning forward, regardless of Patty's poke in his side.

The two in front turned at Wren's words, and Beth smiled cordially, but Craig's thin lips were set.

"Who is she, Coke?" Merriford asked, leaning back to whisper behind his wife and Patty.

"I don't know. Ask Mis' Merriford," Coke whispered back.

"Coke Wren, you ain't got a grain of sense," Patty said in her husband's ear.

"Don't need any in the family I live with," Coke answered, as he chucked Patty's chin playfully.

"Who is she, Emily?" Merriford's shrill whisper reached also to the ears of the young people in front of them. When a man does whisper he never makes a bungle of it.

"You men are the biggest gossips I ever saw," Mrs. Merriford returned. "If you aren't lined up against the Pro-Slavery people, you line up to discuss what belongs strictly to Patty and me to consider. That's Doctor St. Felix's daughter. They've just come to the Eldridge House. He doesn't say a word about his beliefs, but he didn't join your garrison forces. The young men were the first to know her. Girls are at a premium here, as well as down toward Palmyra, Coke, and the young fellows who were up here these three weeks soon found all there are here. Her name is Rosalind. Pretty name, isn't it? That's all I know." Then in a lower tone, Mrs. Merriford added, "Mr. Darrow does remind me of Neil."

"Rosalind St. Felix!" Coke repeated. "What novel do you reckon her mother was readin' when she was born? How'd Elliot get to know her so quick, do you s'pose? He knows a good thing at sight, I reckon."

"Oh, he went to her pa for medicine for Joey, 'cause Doc Robinson was doin' better work carin' for all of us

then. That's how," Patty whispered. "Now, do shut up. The speakin's beginnin'."

On the surface the party was as successful as it was entertaining. The speeches were full of fire concerning the justice of the settlers' cause, and the injustice of the invasion, with many compliments for the heroes who had brought the cannon safely through the enemy's country, and to the heroic women, Margaret Wood and Lois Brown, who had dared to go for ammunition in the town's dire need of defence. There was much good-natured joking and pleasantry at everybody's expense to soften down the bitterness of conflict and every show of courtesy to prove the timber of these earnest citizens, who could fight but would not run.

But underneath the surface, hearts were sore and spirits bitter. The murder of young Barber only a few days ago, who in this very room had lain with the patient serenity of the dead; the indignity of a useless hardship and terror; and the sense that even the influence of this peace-party would reach little further than the hours it filled — all kept an undercurrent of turmoil of soul unlike the smooth face of affairs — impressing the truth that the truce was but temporary.

Two leading men were not present here. John Brown, who believed that only by war could justice be secured, and Hiram Darrow, who held that there is no real power save the power of peace. And both had truth behind them. But, however heavy the shadows of coming events may have fallen to dim the light of this event in the minds of thoughtful men and women there, it was a genuine delight to the young folks who thrive on the sunshine and wither in the shade. Music was interspersed with speech-making, of course. Near the closing of the program, John Speer, who had a genius for directing

things successfully, deftly swung the tone of the moment to a lighter pitch by announcing:

"We have a fine company of young men here to-night. They were no less a fine company during the unpleasant weeks now over. I move you, Doctor Robinson, that they be represented on our program, and that we ask Mr. Elliot Darrow to sing 'The Red, White, and Blue,' and we 'll all join in the chorus."

A general hand clapping and calling for "Darrow! Darrow!" "Let's hear the Quaker." "Come on, Darrow!"

Elliot's hands grew cold. His gift of song was mainly an untrained inheritance, self-cultivated, because he loved music, and especially the music of words. Inheritance counts for much, however. Behind him was a long Quaker ancestry of capable people doing as well the little as the great things of their day, and calmly meeting every demand, confident of victory at last. It was this heritage of never faltering that staid the bashful young man in what seemed to him at that instant the most frightful undertaking he had ever had to encounter.

"I think the Missourians are moving on Lawrence," he whispered in Speer's ear. "Let me go up on Mount Oread and see."

But Speer only laughed, and the call for Darrow went on. Dr. Robinson stood smilingly commanding, and the young man was pushed to the front by the happy crowd. As he turned to face the audience, his heart beating a record-making register in his breast, his eyes met David Lamond's. In the Scotchman's honest face, Elliot read sorrow, disbelief, and a line of something so like contempt that resentment and personal pride came to the rescue where approval might have failed. But he was very pale with a pallor that was accented by his dark

hair and eyes. In the moment's hush he saw little Rosalind St. Felix in the front seats looking up at him with happy confidence, and he smiled back at her. That genial smile that always won its way to the heart seemed to catch the heart of the whole room. He was almost through the first stanza, however, before his voice was quite under control or his self-consciousness had left him.

With the ringing chorus:

When borne by the red, white, and blue,

he forgot himself in the inspiration of the song. Sweet and powerful, his voice rose with the next stanza:

When war winged its wide desolation,
And threatened the land to deform,
The ark then of freedom's foundation,
Columbia, rode safe through the storm;
With the garlands of vict'ry around her,
When so proudly she bore her brave crew,
With her flag proudly floating before her,
The boast of the red, white, and blue.

With the second chorus the crowd was on its feet in that thrill of enthusiasm only patriotism for the old Stars and Stripes can ever kindle. In the exaltation of the moment, Elliot caught the eyes of Doctor St. Felix watching him with admiration. Doctor St. Felix was a small, dark, self-possessed man of affairs whose approval one might value. Beside him stood Colonel Boniface Penwin and Sheriff Jones. Penwin's eyes were almost glassy in their fixed gaze. Even in that instant the singer remembered the lull in the storm on the Trail by the Hole in the Rock, and the shriek of mortal terror that echoed down the narrow ravine in rivalry with the screaming wind of the weather-mad night.

Craig Penwin, in front of Merriford, was very erect and fine to see. But he saw no one, for his eyes were fixed on the floor. And beside him stood Beth, looking with wonderful intentness straight at Elliot. Her gray eyes shaded with their long black lashes were full of a beautiful light. Elliot did not smile back at her as he had smiled at the dainty little daughter of Dr. St. Felix, and Lawyer Merriford alone caught the steady gaze that was only momentary but that seemed to look straight into Elizabeth Lamond's soul. And the lawyer smiled with a curious little pain deep in his heart as he remembered a dark-haired girl whom he had known in his young manhood, the mother of his first born.

"I'll risk stakes on the Quaker," he murmured, softly, and the face of his own boy came to him there.

The audience, carried away by the spirit of the song, stood motionless through the last stanza. And Elliot—he had never sung so wonderfully before. With each word ringing out distinctly and with a depth of tone that was marvelously rich and musical, he sang utterly unconscious that he himself was holding that company by the magnetism of his own personality, as well as by the rhythmical beauty of his voice.

> The star spangled banner bring hither,
> O'er Columbia's true sons let it wave;
> May the wreaths they have won never wither
> Nor its stars cease to shine on the brave;
> May the service united ne'er sever,
> But hold to their colors so true;
> The Army and Navy forever,
> Three cheers for the red, white, and blue.

Coke Wren's eyes were swimming with tears as he hugged Patty's arm.

"Me an' you's the Kansas 'Navy forever,' Patty, ef

we go by that cloudburst that washed our house away last June." He had to joke to relieve his feelings.

"Don't mind bein' the Navy now and ag'in, Cokey," Patty smiled through her own tears. "But this bein' the 'Navy forever' is drawin' it a little too strong on a bird like me. I'm no gull."

There were other tear-wet eyes beside the Wrens' when the last chorus was ended. And David Lamond turned away with a sorrowful face.

"The boy sings true. Why can't a fine fellow like that have the courage of a true-hearted soldier? But if he can only sing for his country, he'll never help to win its battles," and the heart of the brave Scotchman was heavy within him.

The latter hours of the peace-party were delightful. With the social compelling effect of appetizing refreshments and the general spirit of cordiality, and the pleasure of laying aside temporarily the burden of prejudice and antagonism that the conditions of the Territory enforced in the struggle for freedom, it became a time of relaxation and charming intercourse.

Colonel Penwin, who knew how to be most genial, vied with his son in his courtesy to Beth, introducing her to the most distinguished guests, and presenting her to Doctor Robinson and Colonel Lane, to Sheriff Jones, and the officers of the Missouri militia.

David Lamond smiled in his sunny beard as he watched the action of his political enemy.

"If he knew that golden-haired Scotch lassie as well as I do, he would know how little she cares for the sham and show of things. Bless her heart! Let the whole family spread itself in doing honor to my daughter, if it wants to. I'll be as quick to draw my fighting sword against that gentlemanly Colonel as I ever was, if he

thinks he can force his Southern views on me. But as to Craig, somehow the boy attracts me. He is fine looking, to begin with, and he is straightforward, with no attempt at deceit. And then I owe him lasting gratitude for the rescue of Patty and Beth."

A most distinguished host of this party was Winthrop Merriford, doing the honors with exceeding tact and grace. And John Speer, also a man of grace in any community, did much to prove the fine quality of the Lawrence citizens to their equally distinguished guests who forty-eight hours before had been their bitter enemies. And all the while the little Merriford and Speer children raced about with the other little ones whose parents had allowed them to come to this important affair.

"Mrs. Merriford, I want you and Mrs. Speer to meet Miss Lamond," Winthrop Merriford said, as he rescued Beth from Sheriff Jones' company, to her great relief. In the midst of the greeting, Merriford caught Elliot's arm, who was passing just then.

"Present us to your friend, Darrow," he said.

"In a moment; she wants to meet Craig Penwin," Elliot replied just as Doctor St. Felix took his daughter's arm.

"Excuse me, sir," he said to Elliot. "I want Rosalind to meet Colonel Penwin," and the little lady went smilingly with her father.

It happened just then, nobody could have told how, for nobody planned it so, that the attention of everybody else was caught away for a moment, leaving Beth and Elliot side by side and a little apart from the others.

"Elliot," Beth said, with shining eyes, "you sing beautifully. I am so proud of you."

A step nearer. A voice so deep it was hardly audible, and a look no other might interpret, as Elliot said:

"Thank you, Beth. And you *are* beautiful. I am always proud of you."

A shimmer of light blue fluffiness touched about with fine black silken cord, a dancing of blue velvet forget-me-nots in raven hair, and Rosalind St. Felix was at Elliot's side. A throb of pain shot through Beth's heart as she saw how frankly happy the dainty lady seemed to claim Elliot again. The girls were introduced and with Craig the four went away to the refreshment tables together.

"That's the finest quartette I've yit seen," Coke Wren declared as he looked after the four. "What do you say, Merriford?"

"I say," answered the lawyer, "that you and I will earn the reputation we have for gossiping pretty soon. But there is a group of fine types, surely; the Southern gentleman, the staunch Quaker boy, the Scotch lass and the little French lady. All good samples, too."

And with an ache in his heart that would not be stilled as he thought of his loved one under the church-yard grasses back in Massachusetts, and of his boy whose letter he waited day by day to receive, Winthrop Merriford turned for comfort, as he always did, to the sweet-spirited woman who made his home pleasant and filled his years with kind companionship.

Beth looked back as she left the door that night just in time to see Elliot's gentle courtesy as he escorted Rosalind down the hall toward the hotel parlors, and to catch the pleasure and pretty responsiveness with which the girl received his attention.

And Craig—for him the beginning and the end and the middle of the whole affair had had only one note. It vibrated to the same tone always.

"Elizabeth, Elizabeth, Elizabeth."

CHAPTER XIV

WINTER WEATHER

Ever thicker, thicker, thicker,
Froze the ice on lake and river,
Ever deeper, deeper, deeper,
Fell the snow o'er all the landscape.

— Longfellow.

ON the day following the "peace-party" there was a great straightening up of disordered rooms, a great stowing away of party finery, a great settling down to the routine of "the morning after," and a general sense of the uncertainty and insecurity of the time of truce. Yet the party had helped everybody, as relaxation and playtime always help the tense mind and muscles.

Mrs. Merriford and Jupe were busy with the work of putting things to rights and Annie and Nellie Merriford were romping through the rooms, chattering of the evening before, their first party with real grown-ups, when Winthrop Merriford came hastily into the living-room.

Mrs. Merriford was a satisfying woman, who could put more comfort with less effort into the lives she touched than many a more brilliant-minded homemaker could have done. But she never saw a line's width into anybody's mind. Her inward happiness breathed itself out to all who met her, she could not wound anyone, and the dim sense of loss in her husband's maturer years was of something lacking in her, although he could not have said what it was. The daughters, like their mother,

adored their father, but they never in all their years understood that a shadow rested on his life. It was Jupe's quick eye that caught the sign of it this morning, and while the others looked up fondly and blindly, his face was full of sorrow.

"Emily, I have letters from Boston," Merriford announced.

A jubilee of shouts. Letters from home were always a godsend in those lonely days.

"Come into the parlor a minute," he went on. "No, girls," to the rush of the little ones, "let Jupe help you to do mother's work for her now," and he turned them back.

They trotted away. Like their mother, they could be happy at anything. Only Jupe looked imploringly at his employer, who slapped him affectionately on the shoulder as he passed, and the negro could not know how that look of affectionate sympathy warmed the heart of the scholarly man so far beyond him in mental attainment.

"I must go to Boston, Emily," Merriford said when they were alone. He was too much of a wise lawyer to plunge rashly into matters with this wife of his. "I have some important news that must be considered," he went on.

Emily Merriford came to his aid in her way. "We can get along all right, only we 'll be lonely. It 's a good time to go, too. The war is over and the winter will be quiet. How 's Neil? Bless his heart."

Merriford was looking out of the window just then. Something in the street had caught his eyes. Mrs. Merriford turned to look, too, so she lost the deep, heartbreaking sigh that her husband smothered back.

"Neil is still South," he said.

"Why, Winthrop, did he go back again after all? I

thought he had decided to let the matter rest awhile. He's pretty young to marry yet, anyhow."

"He has never been back to Boston," her husband said, gravely.

Mrs. Merriford meditated. "He has n't written us from there, has he? I've been so busy with this trouble here, and with the sick and needy settlers, I have hardly kept track of the family. Is there anything wrong?"

"I hope not," her husband responded. "You are an angel in these sick places, dearie," and Merriford faced his wife bravely. "I had letters from Neil's business partners, the firm of Osborne, Merriford and Osborne, informing me that they hear nothing from him at all and urging me to come at once. I think I'll go."

"He may be in Boston by the time you get there," his wife offered, consolingly.

"Yes, he may be. I must leave this afternoon."

"I'll have everything ready for you then," Mrs. Merriford returned. "I'll get right to work."

"Thank you, Emily," the lawyer put his arm about his wife and kissed her cheek. "You are such a comfort to me."

When he was in the office again Jupe came in hesitatingly.

"You gwine East, Mars'r Merriford?" he asked.

"Who told you so?" asked Merriford.

"I s'mised it," the negro answered, with a grin.

"You are a good surmiser. Now be as good an employe, and keep things all ship-shape till I get back," Merriford said, with a smile.

But there was no smile on the shining black face before him.

"Don't go, Mars'r Merriford. 'Tain't no use now. Don't go," he said, slowly.

"Why not, Jupiter? None of your African superstition now. None of your hoodoo business. If you know of any reason why I should n't go, say so."

"I dassen't, Mars'r, 'fore God Almighty, I dassen't. I hain't out of bondage yet. Not yet."

"Well, then, go back to your service and don't bother me," the lawyer said, kindly. "I 'm leaving this afternoon. Be a faithful helper here till I get back. I 'm going to meet Neil there if nothing happens."

"Nothin' 'll happen," the negro said, slowly. "It 's done did," he added, as he turned away.

"Where to, so fast? You did n't get your beauty sleep after the party, I 'm afraid, Mr. Merriford. I thought it was only doctors who had to get out early." So Doctor St. Felix greeted Lawyer Merriford as the latter collided with him on the steps of the Eldridge House.

"Good morning, Doctor; I 'm just getting ready to start out of town. Maybe I am a little breezy," Merriford replied.

"Going far?" asked the doctor.

"As far as Boston at least," came the answer.

"Will you have time to come into my office a minute?" St. Felix inquired.

"Just about that," Merriford said, and the two went inside for a consultation.

It was said in Lawrence that Winthrop Merriford looked ten years older the afternoon after the peace-party. But he went East that evening, and the bitter weather and the suffering, and the stirring swing of events of the days that followed swept this particular impression out of mind.

And the winter was a bitter one. Even in a land of prosperity, where the common comforts are easily secured, it would have been accounted severe. How

much more keenly, then, did it cut into the life centers on this needy frontier. Not only did the cold blasts and heavy snows swoop in as a surprise, for the impression of a sunny, temperate season had obtained, it fell upon a people not prepared for an ordinary winter's cold. The little unchinked, unfloored cabins, the scarcity of fuel and of means to reach it, the lack of food and clothing, and the tragic force of sickness, all combined to test the souls of the pioneer people and prove their power of sacrifice for freedom. Marriages may be postponed until fairer weather, but births and deaths come at their appointed time. Many a new mound under the snow that winter was marked by a rude slab bearing the inscription: "Beloved Wife and Infant Child."

It was to the homes left motherless and wifeless that the pioneer women ministered most during the drear January and February of this new year.

Mark Darrow was on his feet — and his head — again in a short time, but Joe was less lucky, for pneumonia is persistent, and Doctor St. Felix made more than one call at the Darrow cabin. On the last occasion he brought his daughter with him.

"She is the best prescription I make," he said when he presented her to Isabel. "My patients begin to improve the minute she comes."

"Yes, Mrs. Darrow, it's a case of two evils. When papa can't do anything else he takes me along, and the sick folks, seeing what's coming, begin to get well in pure self-defence."

Her eyes were sparkling and her cheeks blooming. In her heavy dress and warm furs she seemed to defy the chill without, and, as she was deft and sensible, as well as sunny-spirited, it was easy to accept her as her father's best prescription.

"May I leave her here till I go to Palmyra, Mrs. Darrow?" the doctor asked. "I have some grave diphtheria cases there, and I don't care to take Rossie into them unless it is necessary."

"Certainly, let her stay," Isabel replied, and as the doctor left she asked, "Does thee go with thy father into contagion?"

"If I am needed," Rosalind answered. "I've been shut in with scarlet fever, and diphtheria, and twice I staid with the black small-pox. I'm not afraid of it any more. I've had it."

She pushed her black hair back from her forehead and revealed a group of tiny scars. "I got these from the first case," she said, smiling. "Now I'm immune."

"Why did thy father let thee do it?" Isabel asked. Small-pox was truly the black beast of diseases to her.

Rosalind looked up at the older woman. Her young face was dimpled and her clear, dark complexion matched her brilliant black eyes and heavy, glossy hair. A quick smile and a joyous nature were hers, too. It sent a thrill through the heart of the Quaker woman when she said simply:

"Mrs. Darrow, my mother died with small-pox. They wouldn't let me go to her. After that I went to the first case I could, and now I have no fear of it."

Rosalind had her father's quiet way with the sick. She won Joe's heart at once, and she was telling him stories and bathing his face at the same time when Beth Lamond came unannounced into the sickroom.

"Mark sent me in, Mrs. Darrow," she began in apology for her sudden appearance, but she paused at sight of the dainty little lady sitting there so perfectly at home and useful. Something more than surprise held the Scotch lassie. In that moment a vision swept up in

imagination, a picture she would not have made herself, but her imagination made it without her leave. A picture wherein the central figure was this same little lady, in her own home, caring for children; this girl in her neat-fitting dress of dark green cloth with a touch of red in little out-cropping threads here and there, and the cunning little red satin bow tied at her white collar. And the other figure in Beth's picture was a broad-shouldered, dark-haired man, a man whose kindly smile won everybody to him.

Youth can live ages in a minute, and Beth, standing in the hall doorway, saw long, lonely years roll by in that brief instant. She wondered as they rolled how she could ever have felt angry because Elliot once — oh, ages ago — once, had kissed her. Or how she could ever have grieved him, if indeed she had, with her praise of Craig. But wondering ceased, and pictures faded, for Rosalind herself was smiling up at Beth and the two were greeting each other and saying commonplace things.

The sound of footsteps in the kitchen made Joe cry out:

"That's Elliot. Come in, Ellie, I want to show you something. Keep still, girls, and surprise him," he added in a lower tone.

"All right, Joedicker, in a minute; let me wash my hands," came the cheery response.

They heard him splashing water in the kitchen, whistling and singing by turns. His voice at low pitch was especially melodious, and he had hummed the first lines of the old song:

I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls,

and as he set the basin in its place and came into the hall he had reached the softly ringing words:

I also dreamt, which pleased me most,
That you loved me still the same.

"Take your choice," Joe cried, gleefully.

Elliot stopped in surprise. The girls were looking at him unconscious of the expectancy that each face held, but the young man, who was not blind, saw it quickly.

"Well, it 's an embarrassment of riches, little brother; I 'll take both," he smiled genially and held out a hand to each. "Only they don't either one want me. They came to see you. I come in for reflected glory."

How could Rosalind St. Felix know that while the same smile and same hand clasp were for both, when the young Quaker turned to Beth there was something in the glance that had not been there before. But if Rosalind failed to see what was not intended for her, Isabel Darrow across the room had come in just in time to note it and understand its meaning. She looked curiously at Beth with that same sense of loss and choking sensation mothers have had as long ago, maybe, as the time of Eve herself, when she first knew that Cain meant to take a wife from the land of Nod. The sense of the first rift between the supremacy of love of mother and that second supremacy of human love.

Few mothers have there ever been who met this moment calmly nor fought any battle with their aching hearts before they yielded to the inevitable. Isabel Darrow was wise with a broad, womanly wisdom, and the picture her imagination created then, like unto the one Beth's mind had made, but not the same, was half a joy and half a sorrow to her. It would take the silent places and the silent hours wherein her Quaker spirit would be in quiet peace before complete mastery would be hers. Just now she came to her son's side, and neither one could know how to the two younger women she seemed the fit-

test of the three to stand beside him and claim him entirely. It was all a dim sense, however, not analyzed and understood until long afterward.

When Doctor St. Felix called for his daughter, she held Mrs. Darrow's hand clasped tightly in hers.

"May I come again?" she asked. "I have no mother of my own."

Isabel looked with great mother-love down into her pleading face.

"Come as often as thee can," she said, cordially, and she knew why she felt safer to have this girl with her than anybody else just then.

Elliot tucked the robes about Rosalind when he helped her into her father's buggy, and she smiled her thanks with a happy light in her bright eyes.

"By the way, Darrow," the doctor said, taking up the reins, "that young Delaware, White Turkey, is doing well now. He stood the ride up to Lawrence all right the day I took him from here, and he was heroic when I probed for the bullet. Few tribes are equal in any way to the Delawares, anyhow."

"Did you find the bullet?" Elliot asked.

"Yes, close to the bone in his thigh. Loss of blood was all he had to pay, but it's a miracle it was not a fatal loss of blood."

"Did you keep the bullet?" Elliot queried.

The doctor's face was impenetrable.

"No," he answered, "I gave it to him, and told him to keep it. It doesn't pay to get too many races tangled up. One at a time is enough to work upon."

He had made a motion to start, but, holding his rein in check, he leaned over the dashboard toward Elliot, who stood with his hand on the thills. "Darrow, I am a doctor of medicine, not a politician. But I am a South-

erner; my beliefs are with the South in its institutions. I did not come here to force my own notions on anybody, however. I shall think and vote and control my business as I please and let others do the same, unmolested by me. I thought, though, it might be due to you and your parents to know this since you are calling on me for my services."

St. Felix did not explain why he said this to the son instead of the father of the household. Nor did the young man dream that instead of a mere explanation of views on the part of the doctor, he himself was being tested for his run of pure metal and dross.

"Doctor, the Darrows are Abolitionists. That's why we came here to live; why my father did, and I came along," Elliot smiled as he said this. "But I am here to finish whatever he might leave undone. Not with burning and slaughter, though, but with a bigger notion of freedom. But we are not so narrow as to let this come into business matters or neighborhood matters. You suit my mother and father as a physician, and all of us as a friend."

He smiled cordially, and he may have looked beyond the father to the blooming face of Rosalind, who sat listening eagerly. Doctor St. Felix looked keenly at him the while.

"May I say a word in confidence?" he asked; then added, "Be careful of yourself. You will become a mark soon enough. That Indian is close as the grave, but you have done well toward him. When he comes to you listen to him."

Then taking his rein again, he and his daughter drove away.

Joe was loud in his praises of Rosalind when Elliot came into the room again. With the usual privilege of

the youngest child he expressed himself more freely and less judiciously than any other member of the family.

"Would n't you like to have her tell you stories and bathe your face, if you were sick, Ellie?" he insisted.

"I think I would if I was real sick," Elliot answered.

"How sick?" persisted Joe.

"Oh, unconscious, probably," his brother said, carelessly, for the subject was not pleasant with Beth beside him.

"Oh, Elliot Darrow, you took Rosalind St. Felix to the party, and you said yourself you had a good time and a pretty girl, or did you say the prettiest girl, to tease Mark? and you said — well, I don't remember, but you ought to be ashamed of yourself, don't you think?"

"I don't think anything only that you need a quieting powder," Elliot answered, as he patted Joe's cheek. "You take care of yourself and get well. I'll take care of the pretty girls if they will only let me. Now be still."

"Must thee be going, Beth? It is early yet, not three o'clock." Isabel rose at Beth's preparations to leave.

"Yes, Mrs. Darrow, I am going to Penwins' before I go home, and then by Nethercotes'. I've staid too long already."

"Thee could n't do that," Isabel said, cordially, glad that she could so far speak sincerely, and the Madonna face of the beautiful woman was fair to see in this first moment of conquest in the day's unexpected battle.

Beth looked up, gratefully. "Oh, I'll be coming again, unless the storms shut me in."

"If they do," the irrepressible Joe broke in, "Elliot will go to your house. He staid up all the rest of the night on the night of the first storm, and told me stories. I was scared of that Indian being here. And he sang the sweetest songs, and he said no storm was too bad to shut

him in if he wanted to go some places. Ellie's just as good, considering,—he's Mark's brother." This last for Mark's benefit, who was just coming in in his usual bright humor.

"Yes, yes," Mark declared. "He has a high standard to measure up by." Mark stretched himself up proudly, "but I believe the lad will make it. He improves perceptibly."

"Shall I go with you to Penwin's?" Elliot asked, with a side-glance at Mark.

The boy pricked up his ears.

"Come on, Beth," he cried. "We know where good company is. Good-by, Elliot. Good-by, Joe. I was going over there, anyway." And the two hastened merrily away.

In the Penwin home a strange council was taking place. Lucy and Tarleton, with Aunt Crystal, had gone to Palmyra for an afternoon's buying,—the Penwins had money for their needs, more than most settlers, —and Colonel Penwin and Craig were left alone. The Colonel, shut in by days of stormy weather, had seemed to get a new hold on his family. And the children, loving him as they had always done, had rejoiced in the shut-in time that gave their father to them again as he used to seem.

When the colored woman and the two younger children were well away, the Colonel said, "Craig, my boy, I want to talk to you as I've never done before—and may never again."

Craig had been reading a worn, old copy of Byron's poems in lieu of newer books, which were hard to get. He looked up at his father's words.

"I hope, papa, there will be no more outbreaks on either side. I don't see why there must be an eternal

wrangle. Why can't people just come in here and settle things by numbers."

"You are too conservative, Craig. You'd not be a very useful citizen anywhere, I'm afraid." The Colonel was clearly in a kind, fatherly mood. "It is not about what is to be for this Territory that I want to consider now," he went on. "It's you, yourself, I am interested in. Craig, the Penwin family are first of all a family of gentlemen."

Craig turned his smiling face toward his father.

"News to me," he said, jokingly.

But the older man did not smile. "Yes, sir; we are a family of gentlemen," he repeated, "and gentlemen must have money. Money, or the lack of it, Craig, has been the curse of this family."

"Why, papa, we always have what we need. I can't remember ever wanting many things I didn't get," Craig exclaimed.

"You'll not say that long if this Territory is going to keep on as it started in December. We'll be a poverty-stricken set of aristocrats working like slaves instead of a set of wealthy plantation owners on these boundless prairies, with plenty of slaves to work for us.

Craig said nothing, and the Colonel went on.

"Craig, my boy, I must say some things to you to-day, if they are ever said."

"Yes, sir, I'm listening," his son said.

"I came to Kansas because my business in Georgia had become so embarrassed I could not keep on and live as a Penwin should live. I hoped then it would be only a short time until I could build up again, with new opportunities here. I expected to buy slaves cheap in Missouri, and to live like a gentleman."

"By the way, papa, did you know that Roxbury's big

Jupiter, from Atlanta, is up in Lawrence?" Craig asked, hoping to turn to a pleasanter theme.

But his father paid no heed to his question. "I'll be frank with you, Craig. My affairs were so much entangled I could n't get out of Georgia too fast for my own comfort. Naturally, I hoped to rebuild quickly here, and, by the Eternal, I mean to do it!"

There was an explosive vehemence in the last exclamation that made Craig look up quickly. On his father's face strange lines were mingled: hope, love, desperation, and anguish, all struggling with anger and pride. When a man's countenance becomes a play-ground for these emotions in the same moment, strong forces of upheaval are at work within him; and Craig stared at his father in amazement.

"What do you want to tell me?" he cried, his fine, sensitive nature touched by what he had seen. "Do be quick."

He had never spoken so harshly to his father before, and his tone cut the elder man like a knife. But it was Boniface Penwin's last hour with his son. Craig dropped his eyes, and his father went on:

"Craig, you and I will follow different lines of life and thought. I know it as well now as when the fact is old to both of us. I am proud of you. I love you. But we will lead each his own life in spite of the fact that we are father and son. I hope and believe you will never disgrace me."

Craig looked again at his father, and the Colonel knew his boy's thought and knew that Craig was aware of his knowledge. Clear and loud as if he were shouting from the house-tops, Craig's eyes were saying:

"May I but hope and believe you will never disgrace me!" But he said nothing.

"My purpose for you henceforth is this, that you shall be free from Elliot Darrow, his friendship, his criticism, his rivalry, and his powerful influence. For he will be a man of power."

Craig turned from his father with a haughty gesture and with contempt in his tone. "Are the Penwins such gentlemen that a common clod of a Hoosier boy, a Quaker's son, a weak, peace-loving, cowardly Abolitionist, who runs home to mamma when there's fighting to be done,—that from such a creature as this, is what I must be set free?"

There was infinite scorn in his tone. Boniface Penwin turned on him fiercely.

"Put aside your airs and listen to your father. Elliot Darrow is now, and will ever be, your one great stumbling block, your rival, your enemy. He shall not defeat you. By all the love I hold for you, my boy, he shall not ruin your life. Oh, Craig, you are my eldest born. You are the image of your Aunt Lucy, my loved, my only sister. Dead now. Dead!"

The anguish of the wailing tone was heart-breaking, and Craig's face was illumined with sympathy, even as he struggled with his pride.

"Yes, father, yes," he cried, "but there is nothing in common between us. We were friends from lack of other associates, and I confess his plain honesty and pleasant manners made me like him. But I am a Penwin, a gentleman." And Craig stood up proudly before his father.

Boniface Penwin's eyes were full of love and pride and anguish again.

"You are my handsome son. You shall win to success in your life. No Quaker's boy, no son of an Abolitionist, shall rob you of your own. I hate him for the power

that is his against you, and because his accursed face reminds me ever of what I would forget."

"Oh, father, father!" Craig exclaimed, and he put his hands on his father's shoulders. "Let's not talk of him any more. I can drop him out of my mind as easily as I would a bad dream. When I slept again it would be forgotten. I am too much of a gentleman to hate inferior things."

"Oh, Craig — yes, we'll forget him. You may at least, and I'll see to it that he gives you no cause to remember him. Now one other thing."

He looked steadily at Craig, standing now before him with folded arms, his fine face insolent in its contempt.

"You shall love and marry the girl I want for you."

"Father, that is what somebody back in Georgia, I forget who, Roxbury of Atlanta, maybe, said you had said to Aunt Lucy." Craig was looking down in confusion now and failed to see the cold steel of his father's eyes, and the ashen hue of his cheek.

"You shall love and marry, I was going to say, the girl you want for your own, even Elizabeth Lamond, the beauty of Kansas."

Craig dropped into his chair and leaned his head on his hands, while his father continued:

"She will bring to you the best things of your life — honor, virtue, health, beauty, strength of mind, all are hers. That sturdy, frugal Scotch father of hers will give her dower. I shall see that you have full measure from me. Oh, my boy, my boy, in you let me see all the grand, good things that I would have put into my life. Let me live in you, honored, loved, rich, and upright."

The tragedy of the voice and countenance began in a dim way to reveal to Craig what a less sensitive soul could not have grasped in that hour of confidence. He

rose and took his father's hand. On his young face hope and sorrow were writing their lines, but of high filial reverence there was no trace. And the lack of it set a hardness therein.

"I shall love and marry the girl I want for my own, even Elizabeth Lamond," he said, slowly. "With all this, Elliot Darrow has no more concern than the veriest cur of the cowardly pack that gathered on the Wakarusa banks last December."

A knock on the door startled the two, and Craig went forward to open it. On the doorstep Beth was standing, smiling expectantly. The ride in the sharp air had put the June rose bloom on her cheeks, and the wind-blown strands of golden hair curled softly about her face in sweet carelessness. All the best gifts of her whose price is far above rubies seemed to have been given to this fair-faced Scotch lass, waiting for the voice of welcome at Craig Penwin's door.

CHAPTER XV

JUPE'S BONDAGE

We pray de Lord to gib de signs
  Dat some day we be free;
De norf-wind tell it to de pines,
  De wild duck to de sea;
We know de promise nebber fail,
  An' nebber lie de word;
So, like de 'postles in de jail
  We waited for de Lord.

— Whittier.

BONIFACE PENWIN came forward to welcome the visitor with the spirit of true Southern hospitality that is the same in a Kansas cabin as in a Georgia plantation "Big House." Few people there are at any time of life who are not susceptible to the influence of a genial welcome. To a young girl like Beth Lamond it is especially pleasing, for the business of genuine hospitality is to accent to the guest the sense of his own worth.

Craig and his father exchanged one swift glance as the girl came in. The end of their sacred hour of conference, the last one for these two, had come. Henceforward each was to go his own way, and neither would question the other's deeds nor motives. But as father and son, they separated when the golden-haired girl came between them to-day. In the older man's face was all the tragical pathos of the one who is giving up what he is no longer fit to hold, yet giving with it, for love's sake, the awful sacrifice of his own soul, buying with

crime a blessing for another that the crimes already done might be in some measure atoned.

In the young man's face was determination and regret that was near to contempt, but there was no line of pity. Had there been even the faintest hint of affectionate sorrow, it might have been better for the father and infinitely better for him who withheld it.

"I am calling on families this fine day," Beth said, gaily, "and I thought of Lucy. I had an escort from Darrows' part of the way, but he left me to pilot a stranger to Nethercotes'."

In fact, the girl had not thought of meeting the father and son alone, and she was embarrassed, else she might not have mentioned the name of Darrow. She knew in an instant, by the exchange of glances between Colonel Penwin and Craig, that she had blundered, but she also thought that, being an innocent lack of tact on her part, she would say nothing more. And in her soul she resented the narrowness of so courteous a host who yet could not brook the sound of the name of an unoffending neighbor.

"Lucy and Tarleton went to Palmyra this afternoon with Aunt Crystal. Craig and I have the pleasure of doing the honors," the Colonel said, with a bow.

He did not realize as Craig did how easy it would be to overdo matters with a sensible girl like Beth.

She took the offered seat and with pretty grace refused the invitation to lay aside her wraps.

"Oh, it is just a strictly fashionable call I am making," she said, "and I have others on my visiting list. I will be going in a minute."

"Let us serve you something, at least," Boniface Penwin said, and hastened from the room, leaving the two alone.

Then Craig, who had said nothing as yet, changed to his best self as if by magic.

"It was kind of you to remember Lucy, Beth," he said. "You cannot know how lonely she is here, nor how different is this frontier to what she has always known in the South."

Beth's sympathy leaped up in response.

"How careless we are, after all," she said. "We are so — what? bitter in our prejudices that we forget what we owe to one another. May I come to see her oftener?"

"Oh, Beth, you would give her so much pleasure, as you always do to all of us," Craig spoke sincerely, and he realized as he had never done before how easy it became to be unselfish and broad-minded and sincere with this beautiful, sincere girl.

In this hour, following that strange hour just passed, his father's plans for him and his own growing hopes and desires possessed him. He saw clearly how all the future would open to better things when these wishes and plans were realized, and he set his soul to an unwavering purpose, the same purpose his father was holding for him.

Colonel Penwin brought in cake and some harmless fruit cordial. Beth, however, was staunch in her Presbyterian notion of even the semblance of evil, and she left untouched the little wineglass full of its bright liquid. She staid only so long as courtesy demanded, and then gave her good-bys quickly.

"Wait till I get a horse, Beth, and I'll go home with you," Craig said.

"I'm not going home. I'm going to Nethercotes'," Beth returned. "But I'm just as much obliged to you."

"I'll go with you there, then," he suggested.

"But I may whip around by Coke Wren's," she argued, laughingly.

"Then by Coke Wren's I whip too," he replied.

"Well, I'll just go straight home if you are determined to go along."

"The very quickest way to get rid of me," Craig declared.

"And the best for both of you," Colonel Penwin said. "It is too late for Miss Beth to make these calls now, and it is not the best thing to go unattended through the wooded part of the Trail."

"Oh, I am really not afraid, unless,"—she did not finish the sentence, for she remembered that the men from whom Craig had rescued her in the dark ravine were men who trained in the same cause with Colonel Penwin. And in her heart she despised the man behind the pretty manners. But she had no quarrel with Craig. He was most charming when he did unbend, and it was with natural pride that Beth had noted how he was always at his best with her. She was too inexperienced and too free from vanity to think of him as having any deep admiration for herself, but she was human enough to enjoy his attentions, and conscientious in her gratitude to him for his timely aid in her moment of peril. More than this, she never heard his name under criticism at home. David Lamond had a good word for him ever, while his wife said nothing disparaging, although she reserved her best words for Elliot Darrow, whom she had liked from the first meeting after the families had settled in the Vinland Valley.

Colonel Penwin looked after the young people cantering away across the prairies in the cold, late afternoon light.

"If I can get that settled," he muttered, "I'll risk the

others. Beth will see to Lucy and Tarley if I don't. Lucy is a capable girl, and we'll have this Territory going right by the middle of June, anyhow. It's got to be as I want, if I have to kill every Abolitionist in this valley. I'd be doing a nation-wide service if I did."

Craig and Beth galloped along the Trail until they reached the road leading to Lamonds' claim.

"Let's go up on the bluff a minute and see how the valley looks in the winter time," Craig said. "Do you remember how peaceful and sleepy it looked last October?"

Beth remembered that, and afterward, but she said nothing except to assent to the suggestion. The snow was deep in the wooded spaces. Out on the bluff by the fallen log the ground was swept bare. They reined in at the shelter of the evergreens and looked out over the valley, full of a cold sunset light. A typical winter snow-scene was before them, pale and dainty in its coloring, with faint touches of heliotrope and silver here and there, accented by the fine ebony tracing along the ravines, while the pallid sky above was sloping down to scarlet and purple in the cold west.

"A beautiful land," Beth murmured. "Craig, why must all these fields be stained with blood before the State is finally at peace?"

"They need not be if the fanatics on both sides were out of the way. But they are not. Such men as stopped you and Mrs. Wren, for instance, Beth, are not like the Southern people I have always known."

"Oh, Craig, I shall never cease to be grateful to you. I hope I may some time show you how much I thank you."

Pluto and the red roan were standing side by side, and

Craig leaned forward a little toward the girl as he said, earnestly:

"I hope I may always deserve your good will, but I would n't want to think it was just a matter of obligation on your part. And I hope I may always be where I can do you a service if you need me."

"You are very kind," she said, with such frank simplicity in her smile and tone that the young man knew she was putting the most matter-of-fact construction on his words.

"Oh, I don't try to pay any pretty compliments," he said, with a new meaning in his tone.

If Beth noted it she gave no sign, but, urging her horse to the edge of the bluff, she pointed down the Trail.

"Who comes yonder?" she asked, as she saw a figure moving up the slope between the ravine and the hidden way of the Trail.

"That 's a white horse," Craig said. "I can't tell from this distance who the rider is, but it is Darrow's horse, and if it is Elliot riding it he can tell who we are, for he has the longest range of vision of any person I ever saw."

Beth did not look at Craig so frankly now, but kept her eyes on the horseman, while a deeper pink swept her cheeks. Her full red lips closed tightly and her definite chin gave hint to Craig that he who would win this girl must count on something beside soft, flattering words. But conquest meant a prize worth all it cost, and he set his even lips together in sign, with Craig Penwin, of a purpose unchangeable.

"We need not wait for him," Beth said, and turned to face the woods.

"Where 's he been hanging about while you came on to our house?" Craig could not keep back the question.

"Elliot? Oh, I don't know. He was at home when I left Darrows'."

Craig looked curiously at her. "She can lie gracefully, anyhow," was his mental comment.

In the woods they came face to face with John Brown, who greeted them as passing strangers.

"Do you know him?" Beth asked.

"Yes. He's the man who sentenced us each to ten years of trouble up here last October," Craig replied.

"Oh, the man who said that about the horses meaning something. A black horse for power, and a red roan for bloodshed. I guess the white one for peace, with us, is down in the valley," Beth said gaily.

Craig did not smile, as he said coldly:

"Where the white horse, or the one who wears a white feather, will always be, out of the way of harm to himself."

But Beth gave no heed to his word.

"That's the man who had to be shown to Nethercotes' as I came over here. Mark went with him, leaving me to go on alone to your house. Because I didn't have to be shown," she added, with a roguish twinkle in her eye.

"Mark! Hm! she's adroit," Craig thought, but aloud he said: "He's the Captain of the Free-State militia organized in the recent War of the Roses, or of the Wakarusa. There'll be no white horse nor dove of peace wherever he pitches his camp. Now remember what I've said." There was a ring of prophecy in Craig's voice.

"Well, let's hurry home to avoid a battle." Beth gave Pluto a touch with her riding whip and they hurried on their way.

At the Lamond door Craig said, "Beth, may I come over some evening soon? It is mighty lonely out here

this winter. Or is your father real set against us younger fellows?"

"You will be very welcome, I am sure. You should hear how kindly my father speaks of you always, before you ask such questions," Beth said, smilingly, and bade him good-by.

"Just in time, daughter," David Lamond greeted Beth when she came in. "Mother wants to ride Pluto over to Nethercotes' to stay all night. The baby is worse again."

"Count on mother if there is anybody needing help," Beth said. "And by the way, papa, that John Brown came along as Mark Darrow and I were going to Penwins', and Mark left me to show him the crooked trail round the shoulder of the bluff to Nethercotes'. We saw him, I mean Mr. Brown, as we came home."

"Who is 'we'?" her father asked.

Beth blushed a little as she answered. "Oh, Colonel Boniface, Junior, came home with me, although I insisted there was no ugly ravine filled with ruffians between here and Penwins'."

Lamond frowned at her light tone.

"Don't say 'Boniface Junior,' Beth, he said. "There is little in common between that father and son. Craig is a brave, manly fellow, and I do not like to hear you speak lightly of what he did for you. I know young men who would not have had the courage to face four desperate men. There are young fellows who make a fine appearance, but who disappear when danger threatens. We had such in Lawrence last December."

At this point Patty Wren came hurrying in.

"Cokey made me do it," she declared. "He's goin' up to Merrifords' to stay a few days with Mis' Merriford an' the children while Lawyer Merriford's gone. I

wanted to stay over in our own roostin' place, but he just made me come over here." And Patty dumped a budget, neatly tied up, on the floor beside her.

"There's my clean pocket handkercher, and the domino blocks, an' some corn to pop, an' my tattin', an' thread, an' shuttle, an' some good hickory nuts. Somebody sent them to the Darrows with the Hoosier family that moved out in November. Elliot brought some of them over to us this afternoon. Bless his heart. If he ain't the salt of the earth it don't need no saltin'."

Beth noted that her father, so loud in his praise of Craig a few minutes before, said nothing now. And Patty ran on:

"The Good Bein' didn't see fit to give Cokey an' me no children of our own; but ef I was sortin' 'em out myself, an' had the pickin' of the lot, I think I'd a' taken Elliot Darrow first."

"You'd need to stiffen up his backbone a bit, I'm afraid," the Scotchman said, sadly. "He lacks what his country needs — courage."

Beth looked at her father as he said this, but the kind-hearted Scotchman turned away that he might not see the pain his words gave to her, and that she should not see the sorrow in his own face.

"My blessed lassie!" he murmured to himself. "All the Lamonds have been tried and true. I will not have her come to the place where she must blush for the weak will of husband and sons. For every Kansas man will be tried in the fire until we are free, and Elliot Darrow must stand up in this wall of men, or wear the craven's mark of cowardice. And yet, how winning and manly the boy seems. If he weren't a Quaker, and a coward at heart, I could rejoice in him."

Patty was settled in the Lamond home for a brief stay.

She helped with the housework, of course; she made her tatting shuttle fly, while she told stories of old New England. She popped corn and cracked nuts; she read the bible and sang old, old hymns, and recited Felicia Hemans and Cowper. She knew Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" from memory; and she told how Coke declared the coat of arms of the old Wren family had this same white sea-bird on a field of blue-green like the sea.

The kind-hearted Wrens were Yankee-shrewd in their calculating, and Patty insisted on turning the equivalent and a little more of food that she and Coke saved while they were sponging on their friends, as she called it, from their own store into Mrs. Lamond's hands for the hungry settlers in the Vinland Valley, where, as in the days of Hiawatha's Famine,

> All the earth was sick and famished;
> Hungry was the air around them,
> Hungry was the sky above them,
> And the hungry stars in heaven
> Like the eyes of wolves glared at them.

And this, with winter's cold and sickness, was a part of the great sacrifice in those days of winning freedom for a State.

Meanwhile, Coke Wren was up in Lawrence, called there, he told Mrs. Merriford, by a letter from Winthrop, who would feel safer to have a man about to look after his affairs now and then while he was away.

"Winthrop wrote to me to have you and Patty stay here all the time, until he gets home," Emily Merriford said.

"Well, he said somethin' that way to me, too. But Patty thought she'd maybe help a little down Palmyra way. They're awful needy down there. An' sick don't tell it. I see Doc Robinson or that St. Felix doctor often

scootin' 'crost the perairies for some lone cabin. Mis' Merriford, the Good Bein's chief Recordin' Clerk's got a winter's job just settin' down the record o' grit and courage an' everlastin' endurance the women of this Territory's givin' to help their men what's here to defend the eternal right of mankind to secure the blessin's of liberty to theirselves and their posterity. As the Constitution an' By-Laws of our glorious Nation goes on to preamble — King James' Version."

But while Coke's excuses were plausible enough, he did not repeat the whole message he had received from Merriford. The letter had been guardedly worded and was plain and innocent to the eye. The writer had counted, and not in vain, it proved, on the little Yankee's shrewdness in reading its hidden message. For letters are treacherous things to let to wander about the earth at will.

So Coke kept his counsel, except with Patty, who knew by instinct, anyhow, he declared to her, and he counted on her to set him right, even with the written orders before him. He was vastly busy at nothing in particular for days on days. True, the citizens did note that some Delaware Indian was always coming into town from the reservation across the Kaw. They did not remark that it was always the same Indian, White Turkey. But when a tall, fine looking Shawnee began to be seen in Merriford's office lounging by the fire, there were some who remembered him as the brave who had pledged the Shawnees to the aid of Lawrence in the Wakarusa war.

"Taking out his pay in a warm place to loaf," the citizens said. "Merriford's office is better than a half-buried tepee." And then they forgot all about him.

Coke came to know the Indians very well. And be-

cause he was so honest-fibred they came gradually to trust him.

"So you let young Darrow pack you home that night you got shot," he said to White Turkey one day, "and then told him you was out of your head and delirious when you said you went down there to keep watch on somebody that night. Well, I want to know. You're worth adoptin' into the ranks all right, but you redskins go at things so all-fired like dumb oysters."

White Turkey looked blankly impenetrable and said nothing.

"Don't you know you could help a lot if you'd open up and tell what you know?" Coke urged.

"Pale faces talk too much," the Indian said. "White Turkey talk when talk counts," and he shut up for the time, for Jupe came in at that moment.

"I'se ready, Mars'r Wren," the negro said.

"Do you want this Injun to stay here?" Wren queried.

"Indian not want to stay," White Turkey declared, as he stalked out of the office.

Wren closed the door left open by the Indian, and turned to see Jupe lowering the blind to the one front window.

"What for?" he asked.

"So's to git there quicker. Can't do nothin' with all Lawrence gawkin' in here," the negro answered.

Then patiently and painfully there began for Jupe a schooling in two of the three R's, a lesson he took daily now. With Coke as a teacher, and with infinite zeal and persistence, the negro labored to grasp the beginnings of reading and writing. But it was a discouraging task. The big body and the big, loyal soul had so little of brain fibre for expression. The big fingers accustomed to picking cotton, the big muscular strength that could

hold the strongest man in Kansas at arms' length, could not hold the little pencil and make it obey the little will. With the power of a giant and the mind of a child, the great fellow struggled with the harsh beginning of real training for power.

"Talk about abolitin' us from slavery," he exclaimed. "Mars'r Wren, when we 's all done aboluted, ef we ever is, how 's we ever gwine to git free in our own little cocoanutty haids?"

"Just like ever' other race has had to git its mind — liberty,— by bulldoggin' along an' never givin' up it 's books till it was master of itself. You ain't the first folks in this world to come out of your soul-darkness, nor you won't be the last till the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea."

"How 'd Mars'r Merriford know I 'se needin' somebody just like you all to help me out 'n my house o' bondage? I never told him."

"No, Jupe, nor you don't need to tell him nothin', 'cause he 's a lawyer an' what he wants to know he 'll find out anyhow; but you 'll save a lot of time if you tell him straight out what 's on your mind."

"Did Mars'r Merriford done write to you to give me this here lift, you done givin' me now?" Jupe asked, eagerly.

"No, he didn't say a word about it. I found out you needed it. He told me he knowed you wanted it — even if you had n't never said it, and havin' the time to burn this onery winter weather, I could help you some, and you can help Merriford if you will," Coke repeated.

"I don't das' tell I 'm nearder out o' bondage. 'Tain't cause I 'm feared. Hit 's count of him his own self. Hit is so."

The two worked on for a long hour. Jupe was making

progress, it is true, but only slowly, and Coke, with all good-will, was not a finished educator. But the patient zeal of the big scholar and the sympathy and kindness of the little teacher brought to each a measure of reward by slow degrees.

At the close of the hour Jupe asked innocently.

"Say, Mars'r Wren, did you ever find the gun what had that bullet you taken and give to Mars'r Merriford here one day last fall?"

Coke was on the alert, but he drawled carelessly.

"I want to know. Did Merriford show you that bullet?"

"No. He throwed hit away," Jupe replied.

Coke looked out of the side window.

"Snowin' agin, golly! Great Kansas! Sunny climate! mild, temperate winters! Bammy springtimes! That's what the real estate poster said, I read back in Boston last spring. But I hain't a' goin' back."

Coke did not see the shrewd gleam in Jupe's eye, for he was still looking out at the falling snow.

"Oh, hit won't snow forever. You'll be pickin' wild flowers, an' gwine fishin' 'fore ye know it," the negro said, turning his back on the Yankee as he stood at the other side window.

"Fishin'! Well, I reckon I will be. Wish I could go to-morrow," Coke exclaimed.

"Where do you fish down your way?" Jupe asked. "In the Wak'roosy?"

"Most too fur off. I don't know where we would go. It's a good ways over to Ottawa Crick or the Marais des Cygnes," Coke answered, as he whistled meditatively.

"Lemme show you where." Jupe was standing by Merriford's desk laboriously scratching on his old slate

with a slate pencil. "I must be gwine now. Will you help me write a letter to Mars'r Merriford to-morrow?"

"Yes, to-morrow," Wren replied, and Jupe went into the house.

The Yankee, by chance, glanced at the slate as he was putting away the evidences of the day's lesson. Scrawled on it in rude form he read:

"the O in the rok."

He had forgotten why Jupe had put it there, but interested in the negro's progress, he held the slate in his hand and tried to recall the conversation. Then he sat down and carefully scrutinized the slate again.

"Yes," he said, softly. "In the springtime, gentle Annie, I'll go fishin' at the Hole in the Rock. But what will be my bait? And what am I to catch? Golly! I'll toil all night even if I catch nothin' at this Hole in the Rock."

He erased the words from the slate and as he turned to put it away he caught sight of Jupe outside the office window.

"You big, innocent animal! Ef you get over your superstition and crazy notions and let us know, we'd help you. Maybe. But maybe not, neither. Better trust that it's all right as it is, I guess," and Coke also went into the house.

With much effort of cramped fingers and burdensome thinking, Jupe worked out his letter at the next day's lesson. When it was done the teacher looked at his pupil shrewdly.

"You're learnin', Jupiter Pluvius, you're learnin'. You're 'most a lawyer now. You say so much and know so little."

"My name ain't Jupiter Pluzus, er what you called me. Hit's Jupiter P. Roxbury, sah, formerly of Atlanta,

Georgia, sah," and Jupe made a sweeping bow of mock courtesy.

What Coke had read in the letter bore witness to Lawyer Merriford, when he read it in Boston a week later, that Jupe deserved Coke's compliment of saying so much when he knew so little. And a hope and a dread struggled within the reader's mind as he thought of Jupe's full emancipation from his mental bondage.

Merriford read and pondered long over what Jupe had set down with Coke's help. Recalling all Doctor St. Felix had said the day he left Lawrence, be believed he was at last getting a hold on the negro in spite of his bonds. The writing, with much flourish and straggling of letters and words off into lonely corners, ran as follows:

I is comin' on slow, but I hain't none givin' up. I stands by my word. I help Mis' an the little girls. An' I keeps STILL. Do your bestest, an' wait. Mr. Wren he goin' fishin' when hit hain't snowin'. Hit will be warmer an' need n't go south. Hit 's all here when I gits free out o' my bonds. You not find hit no place else but come home to Kansas. The sun is risin' every day always hit will be light. Godalemity bless you all.

J. P. ROXBURY.

With obligin' to C. W. I do not break no promise.

CHAPTER XVI

FIRESIDE FOES

> It is hard to walk on with what fate may have sent
> For your company—hunger and doubt and unrest,
> And yet keep the heart steady that beats in your breast.

CRAIG availed himself of Beth's permission to call in the lonely winter evenings, nor did he fail to make his visits agreeable, and to receive a cordial invitation from David Lamond to come again. The fair-minded Scotchman was too just to hold a grudge against the young man because of his father's views. Craig had rescued his daughter from insult and peril, and had said frankly but quietly, "I would not lift my hand against a Free-State man unless I had other cause," although he did not repudiate his own privilege to a pro-slavery belief.

"The young man is honest with all of us, independent in his views, well-bred, unassuming, and courageous. Somehow, I have faith in him that when the test comes he will run well to good metal." So Mr. Lamond advised with his wife one evening, as the two chatted together by the kitchen fire.

Beth and Craig were playing chess in the living-room, and their voices in lively chatter came to the ears of the older people.

Mrs. Lamond did not respond to her husband's expression. She knew, indeed, he had spoken truly of Craig, but she was a shrewd woman who could keep her own

counsel. And she knew that, added to all that he had said, Craig Penwin was finding favor because David Lamond in his heart was trying to justify his opposition to Elliot Darrow.

"The best husband that ever lived, the kindest father, the lovingest, truest man," Mrs. Lamond said to herself. "But that stubborn Scotch nature that, once set, is unchangeable, that stern notion of courage and loyalty, and, deep down, that wonderful love for his own child, that makes him cling to her, nor want to give her up to anybody,—he doesn't reckon with all these, and it's no use for me to try to show him. I'll trust the Lord and let matters take their course. But," she added, with a triumphant smile, "his will has always been supreme here—a good will, of course—and he hasn't counted on Beth—who's got a chin built just like her father's, and a mouth every bit as firm. It will be a pretty fight when the day of reckoning with her comes. But they love each other, and back of all of us is the loving Father. I guess there'll be no serious disaster."

When the game was done, Beth sat down on the comfortable settle and began to chat of commonplace things. And Craig now proved how quickly he could make an evening pass. The tall old clock, brought from Pennsylvania with much care, struck off the hour of ten.

"I must be going. I did not know it was so late. I am so glad you live in Kansas, Beth," Craig said, jokingly.

"It is convenient," Beth replied, "for if I lived in Pennsylvania or Indiana——"

"Oh, don't mention Indiana," Craig cried, in disgust. "Such a set of weaklings live there. You'd never fit into the place."

"I don't know." Beth's eyes had a mischievous light in them. "I'd as soon live there as in Georgia."

Craig's eyes flashed fire, but Beth was busy pushing the burning wood into a closer heap on the hearth, and when she looked up, Craig's face was fine to see.

"Kansas suits us best of all, doesn't it?" he asked, gently.

"It suits me all right, and if it does you, we have no quarrel," Beth said, lightly.

"Shall we ever have a quarrel, Elizabeth?"

Truly, the voice was wonderful to hear when he pronounced that name, and with the question Craig came around the table, where the chess men lay scattered, and stood beside her whose name he uttered as he did no other name in all the world.

"Shall you and I ever quarrel in earnest?"

"I think it quite likely," Beth replied, smiling at him teasingly. "I am pretty stubborn, like my daddy, and we shall probably get beyond speaking on some pro or anti clause in the State constitution soon enough."

"Elizabeth"—he caught her hand—"whatever happens to the State of Kansas, believe me, I have no part in all this warfare. I am Craig Penwin, alone, not Colonel Boniface Penwin's son."

There was a proud look in his eyes and a strength in his tone, but back of it lay an infinite pleading Beth could not fail to see.

"Good-night," she said, gently shaking his hand, as if that was why he held hers. "Good-night, Craig Penwin. You may be just that to me. I'm not ready to quarrel."

"May I come again soon—maybe to-morrow night? I want to talk to you of some things, Beth, please!" He bent over her and held her hand firmly.

"Let me see"—Beth hesitated playfully—"I have so many engagements ahead, I can't be sure until I consult my calendar. No, I don't think you can come. So many others in this dizzy social time want my company."

"I'm coming anyhow," Craig said, firmly. "There is only one other person."

"Well, go call on her, if there is;" and Beth started to the door.

"I mean only one other young man——"

"How magnanimous!" Beth exclaimed. "I didn't know you would admit there were that many," and with laughing good-nights, they separated.

Craig had not reached the main Trail before he became aware of some one following him.

"It must be my father," he said to himself. "What is the real secret of his interest? Can it be all love for me? Dear papa. Dear papa."

He recalled in sadness the days when his father had been his idol. Few sorrows are equal to the sorrow that comes with loss of faith and respect when a father or mother are found wanting.

Craig stalked on gloomily for some distance. Then he suddenly stopped. He was in the shadow of the wood that hid the main Trail from view of Lamond's claim.

"I'll have it out here with father," he declared. "He shall not track me like a hound."

He stood still in the shelter of a bunch of low evergreens. The figure behind him came forward cautiously and, before Craig was aware, had spied him out. Halting beside a low tree, whose shadow scarcely concealed him, he waited.

"Well?" Craig said, in a low voice, peering keenly at the object he saw.

"You, Darrow?" came a deep voice in response.

At the same time Craig's eyes made out the outline of the man, wrapped in an Indian blanket.

"No, you red Indian," he cried, scornfully. "Did you expect to find Elliot Darrow spying on me back there? You are on a level, you two, whoever you are." And the young man started forward.

But the Indian was too swift for him. With a stride he bounded beyond Craig, and, turning, faced him in the Trail.

"Craig Penwin," he said, solemnly. "You wise fool. You talk big talk. You hate Darrow. You let some man kill him. You let him do it. Same as you do it if you let it be done. You can *not* harm him. Some day you lift hands, so." The Indian raised his hands in the attitude of prayer. "You lift your hands to Darrow. You beg him to spare your life. You dog. Now go home. I've said truth." And like magic the red man melted into the gray-black shadows of the wood.

In spite of his will to think otherwise, Craig could not forget the Indian's prophetic denouncement of himself, and it made him hate Elliot more than ever.

"If the smooth-faced Quaker is playing the spy on me, I'll pay him in good coin," he declared. "I hate trickery and deceit, but if he means to undermine me in that way, I'll come to it fast enough, I suppose. This is the whole game with me now, and I'm in to win. I'll be fair to the fair. I did not vote to come to Kansas. I was brought here. I'd go back to Georgia to-morrow, only I know what's there. My father's name under ban for financial dealing of some kind. Everything went wrong when Aunt Lucy died. If she only could have lived! Oh!"

It was a pathetic sigh that followed, for it marked

the moment of passing of the old honorable way of life for Craig, and the beginning, faint indeed, but nevertheless the beginning, of a new way of winning by any means, fair or foul. No moment in a career can be more fraught with pathos than the one that notes the downfall of high ideals. For Craig henceforth, the gentleman must give place to the trickster.

Meanwhile, the Indian pushed on eastward until he came to the Darrow homestead. A moment he paused in the cedar clump outside. Then he rapped softly at the kitchen door. Mark came to open it.

"White Turkey want shelter," he said.

"Why, hello, partner," the boy exclaimed. "Come in, come in. Father, here's White Turkey; wants to stay all night. Out after the man who shot you two months ago? I hope you got him."

By the hall fire the Indian warmed himself and deliberated before he spoke.

"Medicine Man St. Felix say at sunset you go tomorrow East." He looked at Hiram Darrow.

"Yes, I am called back to Indiana on some business. I saw St. Felix in Palmyra to-day. Lamond and I came part of the way home with him," Darrow said.

"Him go?" pointing to Elliot.

"No. He stays here with mother," and Hiram glanced affectionately at his wife sitting in the shadows of the chimney corner. "He will take care of the place till I get back."

"Who take care of him?" the Indian asked.

"I'll do that," Mark observed, gravely.

But the Indian only frowned.

"You say too big," he said, sternly. Then, turning to the father, he went on: "Not safe go, not safe stay. Let him go."

"I did want him to," Hiram said, smiling, "but he thinks he could do more here."

"Him can, maybe. Big danger here. Little danger go." White Turkey's face was expressionless, as usual. "Westport to St. Louis — not safe. All Wakarusa worse;" and he waved his hand to take in the whole Vinland Valley.

"Ellie's got personal property as well as real estate to look after here." Mark was irrepressible.

White Turkey nodded gravely, but added: "Him need this." He drew out a big tomahawk from beneath his blanket. "White woman need this." He dropped the weapon, and lifted his hands as in prayer.

"We all need prayer," Hiram Darrow said, reverently, "and we Quakers believe it is stronger than the tomahawk to defend us from our enemies. Our strength cometh from the Lord."

The Indian looked curiously at Darrow as he said this. Little removed from the savage himself, with all the teachings of the wild border strife to show him the white man's way, this clear-eyed, fearless man seemed not to belong within his comprehension of human beings. Then he looked across to where Isabel Darrow sat. How unlike she was to the squalid squaws of the savage wigwams, or the poverty-stricken, and too often terror-stricken, women in the pitiful pioneer homes on the border. Isabel wore the Quaker dress of the olden time. About her neck and lying in soft folds over her bosom was a spotless white lawn kerchief. Above it was her smooth, white throat and above that her peaceful, beautiful face, framed in a mass of smooth, soft, dark hair lying in curving lines about her brow. Elliot was standing behind her chair, ready to bid her good-night. White Turkey looked at the two, then crossing his hands, he

mumbled in the Delaware language some words they could not understand. But they knew instinctively it was an Indian's blessing.

For a third time White Turkey became a guest in the warm shelter of this Quaker home, but at daybreak the next morning he was off for the Reservation beyond the Kaw River. Hiram Darrow and his son counselled long over the proposed journey, but in the end it was the father who went away, leaving the son to what the Delaware had warned them was the greater danger. Yet all of this that was known to their good neighbor Lamond was the opinion of Dr. St. Felix.

In Lamond's presence St. Felix had urged that it was a perilous journey at this time for a man who would never conceal his abolition notions. And Darrow had suggested then that he might send his son in his stead.

So another mark was sorrowfully set against the young man whose good qualities and magnetic personality were always appealing to the sturdy Scotchman.

Craig did call on Beth the next evening as he declared he would. But she was not at home. Neither was her mother. So Craig and Lamond spent the evening together without them. It seemed an opportune thing for Craig. Every day since his conference with his father he had grown in the determination to carry out his father's wishes and his growing life-purpose. Strong as was the influence Beth held over him in itself, the conditions of his future demanded her to make his life successful. In his keen intelligence he had noted day after day, throughout the fall and winter, the real character of his father.

Beth should tie his father's son to the life that he wished to lead. With her was respectability and honor, and love, and home. In his loneliness, he had grown

selfish as he would not have done in his childhood home. But his admiration and affection for the beautiful, capable girl were deep and genuine. He realized daily how essential she was to him and he resolved to move swiftly toward the conclusion of his purpose.

It was fortunate for Craig that he had chosen this particular evening for speaking to Beth's father. Hiram Darrow had met Lamond on his way to Palmyra and had bade him good-by with the request that he might keep an eye on the Darrow family while the father was away.

"I'll not be gone long, and the boys are pretty good frontiersmen, but I'll feel safer to know thee is near the family," Hiram had said.

"I'd feel safer if you were here, but I'll be glad to do all I can," Lamond had replied, as he gave a sad good-by, and, sick at heart, went on his own way.

"Mr. Lamond," Craig began, as the evening was passing, "I want to say something to you in confidence."

He looked up fearlessly into the older man's face, and there was no reason to be ashamed of the confidences of such a young man as sat before the fire that night. And yet a shaft of pain shot through the Scotchman's mind at the words. He could not have told why. But he answered cordially:

"I shall keep sacred what you say."

Craig looked into the heart of the burning coals a while before he went on.

"I have never tried to conceal the fact that I am a Southerner. It is a part of my inheritance from a long line of Penwins to think slavery may be a blessing as well as a curse. Every institution may be abused and disgraced. I myself know little of that side of slavery. My father had one big negro whom he sold — but that's

no matter now. I cannot help thinking of the happy black folks and feeling they are safer than if they were free. I may not always think so."

That was a more adroit remark than Craig had calculated, for it gave his listener a sort of justification of his own hope and motive.

"But, Mr. Lamond, when you talk of the South and the North, may I say I am here in Kansas, which is neither south nor north, and I am for neither one against the other, but for the flag of our one country above them both."

The slender, fine-faced young Southerner was good to look upon as he made this declaration, and no other sentence could have been framed just then that could have gone so far to win his cause with the father of the girl he loved.

"Craig, my boy, you are on the right track," his host said, heartily. "I understand your Southern heritage just as I know my own love for the old headland of Ard-Lamond in Scotland. Dear to me are the old Scotch words and ways. You may have noticed how much my little girl wears the gray and purple and silver plaids. She does it for her father, because they talk to me of the old clan and old traditions."

"And they are wonderfully becoming to her as well," Craig murmured.

"But with all my love for Scotland, I stand for the red, white, and blue of the American flag." Lamond grasped Craig's hand as he said this.

Did the same memory come to both in that moment, the echo of the inspiring words:

> May the wreaths they have won never wither,
> Nor its stars cease to shine on the brave!

Craig did not wait for memory to play any part with either one.

"Mr. Lamond, it is a hard thing for a son to turn against a father, as you know it would be for a daughter to turn against her — mother." Lamond's grave face wore a shadow of pain at the words.

"I have hoped, and still hope, not to do it, but I have come to the parting of the ways with my father. Henceforth, he will think and act according to his own views and I will do the same. Our views and actions may be widely separated. I hope not, but they may be."

There was a hesitancy and a manliness, the best part of Craig Penwin, in this speech, and it won its way to the fatherly heart of David Lamond.

"They say the Spring will see a renewing of troubles here. You will not blame me if I keep as clear of it as I can. But where human justice and human needs are concerned, I hope to do my part fearlessly. They will not all be brought about by our people, either, Mr. Lamond. Not all Northern men are brave and humane as yourself, and Lawyer Merriford and John Speer, up in Lawrence.

"No, not all," Lamond agreed, sadly. "I am rejoiced to hear you declare yourself, Craig. It is a great thing to stand solidly somewhere. I'd rather fight an open foe than to play at peace with a weak-willed, cowardly friend."

Craig's face showed quickly how well he understood, but his good judgment kept him from speaking further just then.

Awhile they sat in silence. Then Craig spoke, and his fervor and earnestness left no place for doubt in his hearer's mind.

"Mr. Lamond, I want to say something that may not

please you. But I come to you first, determined to let it rest there if it is your pleasure."

There must be something in a fine inheritance of mind, else Craig could not have moved so easily on his course to-night.

"Your daughter, Elizabeth"—how full of grace he made that name!—"has come to mean more to me than anybody else ever did or ever can. I have not said a word to her. I don't know her mind at all, for she is too womanly to let me know it in any event. I want your permission to woo her, and—heaven help me!—to win her, if I can."

Lamond could not see beyond those words, "heaven help me," to the cunning power and cruelty of Boniface Penwin, whose help without the aid of heaven would be given to this cause. He could not know how earnestly Craig wished for a heaven-willed victory, nor how back of that was the grim determination that victory should be his, nor heaven, nor any other power should rob him of it.

"I have one more thing to say," Craig added, only half conscious that it was his winning card. "It came to me to help to protect Elizabeth from a crowd of half-drunken ruffians. Any man—any true man—would have done the same. I claim no return for doing my duty. I want to be found worthy in myself, not for what chance may favor in me. May I try to win your daughter, David Lamond?"

He stood up before the older man, his fine, sensitive face glowing with the best inspiration that the young years of a life can know. He had been true and fair and frank. In himself there was everything worthy. And David Lamond, honest, kind-hearted, and just, was too true to himself to deny what he had no right to refuse.

"You have my permission to try," he replied, slowly. "And so long as you are the same that you are to-night, you have my good wishes. Only take time. Don't be in such a hurry as to force matters. You are both young. You can wait."

Over in the Darrow cabin that night, Elliot and his mother sat late together. What the children lacked in school opportunities in the West, their mother went far in supplying. She had been trained in college herself and she knew the value of ideals in a life struggle. To-night she had been reading poetry to her sons. When Mark and Joe were asleep, Elliot and his mother fell into that confidential mood that, between mother and son, should never be outgrown. They talked of many things, arriving at last to the boy's ftuure.

"What am I to be, mother? I must be about it soon," he said.

"Yes, all too soon," his mother replied. "What is thy own wish? What most pleases thee in doing it?"

"I want, some time, to be a doctor of medicine. It seems to me that Dr. Robinson and Dr. St. Felix do more good than any other two men in Kansas. St. Felix leaves everything alone except his medical practice. Yet I know he is a Pro-Slavery man."

"Would thee like to study medicine with him? Or with Dr. Robinson?" Isabel asked.

"I think I should like St. Felix best," Elliot replied.

Isabel sat meditating for a little while. Then she said, gently:

"Maybe his daughter would be some attraction to thee. She is a winsome, lovable girl."

Elliot did not respond to this at once, but sat looking thoughtfully before him. He could not know, for only mothers can know what this hour of renunciation

means to the mother with her son. And Isabel Darrow was going bravely through its moments, knowing well that at its close she should rise up rejoicing in victory.

"Mother, mine"—Elliot had turned to her now, and that smile of genial out-giving, good-will, and confidence illumined his face—"I want to tell thee something to-night."

"Yes, dear," she smiled back at him.

He took her hand and caressed it gently. When he spoke, at length, his voice was so deep and sweet, and yet so powerful, it startled her who thought she knew her boy in all his moods.

"I shall never be interested in little Rosalind St. Felix, because I have already found what fills my mind too full to let her in—even if she wished to come in," he added, smiling again.

"Yes, Beth," Isabel said.

"Yes, Beth," Elliot responded.

"Thee is young. There will come others before the time for thee to settle definitely." She did not say what she could not help but believe, that her boy would find favor with women in his manhood years beyond the favor shown to most men.

"I know what I want now." There was no doubting him.

"I believe thee does," his mother said. "Does Beth know what she wants?"

"I don't know," Elliot answered.

"Then find out," Isabel advised.

"I have found out one thing already. David Lamond does not like me because he thinks I'm not only not eager to be a soldier, he thinks that I am a coward."

"Has thee given him cause to think so?"

"Not intentionally. Some circumstances I could not prevent point him to thinking so, and he keeps on in the belief," Elliot said.

"What will thee do?" his mother inquired.

"Let him think what he chooses until he learns better," Elliot answered.

"And give up Beth?" Isabel's voice was not quite even as she asked the question.

Elliot rose to his feet. Broad and firm-built, young, handsome, intelligent, strong in his conscious power, poised, and withal gentle and genial in spirit, it was no mean rival with whom Craig Penwin had to cope.

"No, I will not give up Beth," he said, in a man's deep voice of power. "She may give me up. But it must rest with her, not with her father; and, as to my courage or lack of it, mother, I do not play any cheap parts for mere show. I can wait for my real test to come. And when it does come, if I am not worthy, then I deserve contempt. I shall live my life in my own way, and settle at last,"—he spoke reverently now—"for reward or failure, with Him who gave it. Thee has taught me wrongly all these years, if thee thinks I could do otherwise."

Isabel rose and stood beside her son. She had won her own battle. She felt in her soul that he would win his greater conflict.

"The Lord bless thee and keep thee, the Lord be gracious unto thee, the Lord make his countenance to shine upon thee and give thee peace." She kissed his forehead and bade him good-night.

And it was thus that two parents, Boniface Penwin and Isabel Darrow, were, unknown to each other, sending forth their sons on the same mission. And the prize

to be gained at last was the love of a beautiful, noble-hearted girl.

Early next morning, Elliot was off for a long, cold ride to Lawrence. To a young man of his physique, sleep came easily, and he had risen with that sense of strength that refreshed nerves and rested muscles can give. The ride in the cold winter air brought the warm red blood bounding to the surface, and his cheeks were brilliant and his dark eyes were sparkling when he reached the office of Doctor St. Felix.

The physician grasped his big firm hand with the joy of a man who would have all men well in body and mind.

"You don't need me," he said, as he led the way into his room at the Eldridge House.

"Nor me," Rosalind said, as she rose from her father's desk, and came forward to greet the young man. "I'm papa's nurse, you know."

"I may need you both," Elliot said, smiling. Matter-of-fact as the doctor was, he could not help glancing curiously at his daughter, whose sunny face was never so bright as when this new acquaintance was near.

"I came to talk with you about your profession; and yours"—he turned to Rosalind. "My needs may be many."

Then Elliot made known his errand, and father and daughter listened with interest.

"I shall soon need help," the doctor said, "unless a real war destroys this Territory entirely. I shall be glad to consider you as a possibility."

"And you'll need me even if there is a war," Rosalind said, laughingly. "You'll stay for dinner, now, won't you?"

Elliot stayed, and all the Eldridge House diners knew

that the handsome young Quaker from the Palmyra neighborhood was the guest of the St. Felixes.

On his way home he met Craig Penwin going up the Trail.

"Hello, Craig," Elliot said. "Going to Lawrence? I just left it waiting for you."

"Hello, Elliot," Craig responded, but said no more. His business took him, also, to the office of Dr. St. Felix, in Lawrence, where he found Rosalind alone.

"Papa has gone to make some calls over among the Delawares," she explained. "He's getting to be a big medicine man for a few of the better class of Indians."

"He must be very busy," Craig said.

"He is. There is so much suffering this cold winter. If the settlement increases there will be need of other doctors here."

"That will be a hard need to meet, I believe," Craig said. "More lawyers and real estate agents and cheap politicians and general riff-raff come to the West each month. But real useful men, like your father, and real statesmen, and good citizens are scarce."

"I don't believe it," Rosalind differed, prettily enough. "Of course, I think my papa is a good citizen, for he just sticks to his business; but I've been with him everywhere out here, and not only in Lawrence, but out in these lonely cabins, where settlers are sick and poor, Mr. Penwin, there are the noblest men, all stanch in their determination to make a fine State out of poor Kansas."

"Nevertheless, they are not going to make doctors to help your father while they are making a State," Craig insisted.

"Well, I don't know about that," Rosalind replied. "One pretty fine-looking young man was here this very

day, from down your way, too, who may begin the study of medicine with papa soon."

"Who could he be?" Craig questioned, in pretended amazement. "I've just come in."

"Oh, there are others down your way," Rosalind declared. "It was Mr. Elliot Darrow."

Two nights ago, Craig had opened the gates of his soul to receive any means that should help him to win his aim. And Temptation, forever lying in wait outside our walls, rose up at once to enter in. Not without some little show of resistance, it is true. Natures do not break without much bending. And Craig, as he looked at little Rosalind St. Felix, felt a strong stab of conscience. But Temptation, ever smooth and wily, assured him it was but a momentary pain.

"Rosalind would worship Elliot — any woman would, for that matter," Craig had to confess to himself. "And he would feel as I shall, when Beth worships me. I'll do him a kindness, maybe."

Maybe? With only a faint glimpse of sorrow for little Rosalind in the event of failing plans. That was for her to consider. Poor Rosalind! Aloud Craig said:

"Elliot Darrow is going to study medicine? I know one reason for it." He looked at the girl a moment, then turned away, adding: "I don't blame him, Rosalind."

A blush swept over Rosalind's face, as she said:

"What makes you say that?"

"Oh, Darrow is a good fellow — strong in his likes and dislikes — and he will generally get what he wants. He may have a special interest in medicine."

Dr. St. Felix came in at this moment and Craig made known his own errand. And all the while the daughter's mind was full of the picture of the young Quaker as he had looked that morning when he came in, brilliant

with the coloring the crisp air gives, and the winning smile, and the jesting words, "I may need you both." Pity her that she put a new meaning here, because her heart went with the meaning.

When Craig rose to leave, Dr. St. Felix said:

"I understand you, my boy, I understand. I know conditions here, and back in Georgia as well."

Craig did not dream how much that last clause meant.

"If you find it necessary to hunt a new home, come here. Young men without homes are no less safe in this world than young women are. You are right in your position of non-partisanship. In the end, slavery will win here, I believe, but the struggle will be awful, because there is an element of earnest manhood building up this Territory that grows more invincible in its defence with every hardship it has to meet. The South will win only by numbers, wealth and brutality. Once the victory is won, this will be a stately realm, with the best Southern blood here. Only a little of it here now." He smiled at Craig with this personal allusion to his own family and the Penwins. "But before that time, a wall of men, God help them!—the finest men I have ever known—must be battered down and strewn in destruction on a blood-stained land."

Craig looked at him earnestly as he went on.

"There's John Speer, the editor; there are Lane and Robinson, invincible and capable; there's Lawyer Merriford, the real statesman; and that grand Scotch fighter, Lamond; and Captain John Brown, a man of strange and terrible force beneath a plain, unassuming exterior; and not the least of these, it may be nearer to the greatest, is that firm-set, fearless, Godly man, that Quaker, Hiram Darrow."

A throb of anguish pulsed through the young South-

erner, as he felt the shame that Boniface Penwin's name could not be listed here. Then, beside a dead pride, he laid down a dead ideal of honor, justifying the second from the first.

"These men are types of the real body of settlers," the doctor went on. "Knowing them as I do, Penwin, you can understand why, Southerner that I am, and believing slavery is not the curse they think it is, because you and I have seen it at its best — you can see why I am non-partisan, and why I forecast a tragical story, before there is another star sewed into the field of blue on our flag, and another State is made out of these beautiful prairies and fertile valleys."

When Craig bade Rosalind good-by, he gave her hand a gentle pressure.

"Your father opens his doors to me, if I need a home, Rosalind," he said. "I come as a brother, not as a doctor."

She understood him, and in spite of her effort at self-control, her sunny, expressive face gave ample token of the thought behind it.

CHAPTER XVII

SPRING WEATHER

When first I loved in the long ago,
And held your hand as I told you so—
Pressed and caressed it and gave it a kiss,
And said, "I could die for a hand like this!"
Little I thought love's fulness yet
Had to ripen when eyes were wet.
— James Whitcomb Riley.

ONE day the thin, bitter air of winter, that rasped like saw-teeth, harried the earth with its grating chill. The next day, as if by magic, the balmy south breeze came pouring over the land. Fair and far, the spring sunshine brimmed the Kansas plains with a flood of golden glory. The prairies took no time to yawn and stretch themselves lazily in the sweet warmth and light, but sprang into verdure at a bound. Every little brown bud became a leaf, every close-shut ball an expanding flower. Along the woodland way of the old Santa Fé Trail the odors of moist air and fresh life-giving earth mingled with the sweet scent from every blooming shrub and tree. Out on the open plains

The pen of a ready writer
With an artist's hand to guide the pen,

could never make the picture quite complete. The evening primrose, the thistle poppy, the buffalo-pea, the yonkopin by the water's edge, the cardinal bloom and blue lobelia, the purple and cream and silver and scar-

let of a myriad blossoms, like an Aztec mantle, tinted all the sunny prairies. Dawn and sunset and moonrise saw the same old miracle of beauty, ever new and marvelous. And golden light and soft spring rain brought anew their time-old joy and refreshing; while far overhead, and wide away to the uttermost limit, where things finite melt and blend into things infinite, in gray cloud-mist or fathomless blue ether, the heavens declared the glory of God, and the firmament showed his handiwork. In the Vinland Valley the land was especially fair, and the settlers, relieved at last from the cold, and famine, and fever, took hope anew in the bright, new, hopeful spring-time. And the stern, unbending spirit that had staid them in the dreadful winter months, now strengthened itself triumphantly in these kinder days.

The latter part of the cold season found Elliot Darrow busy in his new purpose, giving all the time he could to the study of medicine. He went often to Lawrence, but not for extended visits. He saw much of Rosalind, and found her a delightful friend, and especially companionable, because of her knowledge of her father's profession. His acquaintance in Lawrence widened, and the education that makes a man of affairs opened for him.

Dr. St. Felix's appreciation of his pupil grew steadily. And Rosalind! Her sunny nature expanded with the days. And all the more were her associations pleasant because Elliot showed her frankly that he enjoyed her friendship, without giving hint of thinking of anything more. Rosalind could have offered no reason for her secret hope and anticipation, yet daily she was picturing the joy it must be to the woman who should win Elliot Darrow to complete conquest. His genial manner made him a favorite with everybody. He had the

gift, too, of not talking too much, yet he was fearlessly outspoken if he chose to be.

He saw little of Craig in this time and only once since his father went East had he seen Colonel Penwin. That was on the afternoon of his first visit to Dr. St. Felix's office. He had been thinking of Craig after the two had met on the Trail, and in the confidence of youth he had told himself that, courtly and dominant as the fellow was, Craig Penwin had a surprise in store if he thought he could outplay the Quaker boy in the game that was pending.

Elliot was smiling triumphantly as he rode along, and from Craig his mind ran on Craig's father, suggested maybe by the recollection of the stormy night in the ravine. He was near the ravine now, and, as his horse cantered down the slope to the crossing by the Hole in the Rock, somehow he was not surprised to come face to face with Colonel Penwin. It was only a fulfillment of his thought at the time.

"Good afternoon!" he said, politely, lifting his hat. For Boniface Penwin inherently commanded recognition.

"Good afternoon, sir," Penwin replied. Then, as Elliot would have passed on, he said, "May I have a word with you? I want to settle some things at once."

A feeling nearest to fear that Elliot had known since his boyhood possessed him, and his hand on the bridle rein may have seemed unsteady, as he replied:

"Certainly;" and half turning on his horse, he faced the colonel.

The impression gave Penwin his line for action.

"The boy is a coward. I'll fix him with one shot," he said to himself, and he prepared to take aim. In a voice that might well have awed an older man, he spoke:

"Darrow, you are a pretty good fellow in your place,

but you don't always stay there. Now, I'm going to be plain with you. And you must understand, I mean what I say, and mean it here."

Elliot's hand was not trembling now, and his dark eyes were fixed on the older man with an expression hard to fathom. He had noted the intense feeling back of the colonel's words. He noted, also, that the man was armed with a heavy revolver, and inside his coat was the gleam of a half-hidden knife. He had no notion of Penwin's business with himself, but he understood his own business. And Penwin, who was not so alert as he had been at the moment of meeting, did not catch the change in the younger man.

"You are a Quaker Abolitionist, the son of a—must I say it?—cowardly Quaker Abolitionist. Like father, like son."

"Not necessarily," Elliot said, with a smile playing about his lips.

The words stung the colonel, while they angered him, for his own son was always in his mind.

"If he means to insult me with allusions to Craig, he shall pay the full penalty for it," he thought, "and if he means to play the hypocrite and beg off from his father's notions, he deserves all he will get." Aloud, in a cutting tone, he said:

"You yourself are an Abolitionist. What do you say to that?"

"I don't care to say anything," Elliot replied, and the colonel mistook the calm tone for a mark of submission.

"He is even easier than I thought," was his mental comment.

"It may be a kindness to tell you here what you won't be long in finding out. You and your kind will

soon be run back to Indiana, or New England, or wherever you came from. There is nothing surer under the sun — that is, if your lives are worth anything to you. I'm giving you friendly warning."

It had anything but a friendly sound, that warning note. And the words and the attitude and the expression of the big, tyrannical, hot-headed man were strangely out of keeping. For Elliot read fast enough behind the voice whose hand would help to hold the driver's whip for the running, and whose weapon would hold the murderous bullet for the laggard of the race.

"Now to make it easier for you, and to do you a favor *you will not be slow to value*" — there was no mistaking the threat veiled in the language — "I shall say something here this evening that will be said only once." He paused to let the full force of his words take effect.

"Well, say it," Elliot replied, composedly. And still the colonel failed to catch the spirit behind the even voice.

"I have this to say. You have the notion that you can stay here, and steal away from my son what belongs to him. I mean a girl's affection. You are in love with Beth Lamond. You shall never marry her, nor prevent her from marrying Craig. Her father's consent is already given to Craig to try to win her. You will not put one stone in his way, you hear me?"

Penwin was close beside Elliot now. The heavy revolver and the gleaming knife seemed murderously convenient, and Penwin was a giant in his muscular power.

"You hear me?" He growled the question fiercely.

"I do," replied the young man.

In the late afternoon light, mounted on his white horse, with his white face, from which the color had

"Boniface Penwin, you are an infamous liar"

ebbed away, with his dark eyes full of fire, there was about him that subtle sense of the invisible protection that goes only with the perfectly fearless soul.

"You may have the foolish notion that she cares something for you," the colonel burst out. "She does not. So much, indeed, does she care elsewhere, that she even comes to see Craig when she knows he is alone. She came not long ago to see him; she sent your brother Mark away and came on alone. They were together for hours. I sent her away at last. I thought it was better for her." There was a look of hatred in Boniface Penwin's eyes, and an insulting sneer in his expression as if he would ask, tauntingly, "What do you think of that?" And to the unspoken query, Elliot replied, in a voice so deep it should have warned the older man:

"Boniface Penwin, you are an infamous liar."

A blow full in the face could not have blinded Colonel Penwin more. His voice fell to the low depth of almost inaudible passion.

"This is my last word to you. Understand me! You will keep out of Craig's way. You will give up all attentions to Elizabeth Lamond. You will not by one word or act cause her to think of you, nor win her thought a hair's breadth from my son. You will promise me here, and now all that I ask. As sure as there is a God in heaven, or a devil in hell, you will not vary one jot from my commands to you here. Promise me, now!"

As the eyes of Cain must have looked to his brother Abel, when the two were alone in the field, so Boniface Penwin's steel-gray eyes were fixed on the Quaker boy, the son of a craven Quaker Abolitionist, who never carried a gun, and who believed in the spiritual quackery called "brotherly love."

Then he whom David Lamond considered a coward, a seeker for his own safety, a craven in war, and a weakling in peace — the same Elliot Darrow turned squarely before the big, heavily armed man. Lifting his dark eyes to the face before him, he spoke steadily:

"Boniface Penwin, I promise you nothing at all. I shall do exactly as I please, and, so far as I am concerned, you and all your kind may go to the devil."

Then, wheeling his horse about, he rode down the Trail without even quickening his pace.

Penwin had fastened his eyes on the young face, and something there and in the proud carriage of his form seemed to hold his enemy motionless. As the Quaker turned to go, he caught his breath in excess of anger, and then — the still, glassy pool was looking up at him: featureless, colorless, a white bubble where the stream trickled into it; a little foam where the overflow slipped out, a formless, dull menace — and Penwin sat again and stared at the waters as he had done on the October eveing in the autumn gone by.

The next evening, Elliot went to Lamond's to call on Beth. Craig was already there, and Elliot, who had faced the father in his anger, found the son a harder foe to meet. For Craig carried all the conscious advantage of possession.

"I didn't know you had an engagement for the evening; I think I'd better not stay," he said in confusion.

"I haven't any engagement; Craig just came in, unheralded, like yourself," Beth answered calmly. "Mother is popping corn in the kitchen. She will be here with it in a few minutes."

Elliot still hesitated, for he could not thrust his company on those who had not expected it, and Craig

adroitly let him feel his intrusion. He held his hat and turned to go, when Beth put her hand on the door.

"You are always welcome," she said, in a low voice. "Please stay." And Elliot did not go.

No member of the company ever forgot that evening. Nor did rivals for one claim ever show to better advantage. Craig could be brilliant when he chose, and with his inborn aristocracy and his sense of superior hold upon the good-will of the family, he became a charming guest. But the undercurrent of a selfish motive, the sense of sham somewhere, made a hollow ring. And even with his advantages, Elliot seemed unawed by Craig. Then, too, his own genial character had never shown itself so well before. And, with all, the face of Isabel Darrow's son reflected his mother's beauty as he sat in the Lamond home that night.

"Craig can never win against a fellow like that," the shrewd Scotch father thought. "There must be some means besides those already used to accomplish this thing."

When the good-bys were said, it was Elliot who was last to leave, and the timid glance of Beth's gray eyes, that had looked so frankly up at Craig a moment before, made the Quaker's heart beat happier as he went away.

A little distance the two young men followed the same trail. They said good-by with no show of coldness, but each knew that the parting of the ways had come for them. When next they spoke as friends, strange lines had come into their lives, and different far were conditions about them. They stood not equal then, but one was suppliant to the other.

And now the Kansas springtime had come, unlocking the land to freedom again, unlocking the pent-up settlers

to industry and hope, and unlocking the heart of youth to love and promise.

It was Sabbath, clear, balmy, and bracing, in the Vinland Valley. The peace of God was over all the prairies, the joy of the glad season of growing things was in the breezes that poured out a libation of honor to him who gave them. There was a preaching service again at Palmyra, and again the scattered cabin homes gave up their households to swell the audience.

Patty Wren always declared that when she did things, with no reason for the doing, she did her best.

"Birds go by instinct, anyhow," she declared, "and I was a Sparrow, christened Patience Sparrow, before I married Cokey Wren. So I've always been a bird."

On the Saturday night before, Coke had gone fishing, not by Jupe's order, for he had evidently forgotten that, but down in a fairly good fishing place in the creek; and the meagre catch furnished the Sunday dinner.

"I ain't no reason for doin' it, only fresh fish is real tasty this time o' year, but I'm goin' to bring Beth Lamond home with me for dinner, an' you're goin' to bring Elliot Darrow home with you."

"I want to know," Coke said, slowly. "Hain't you takin' on some job, Patty? Together we could n't pull down two hundred pound without Cotton Mather throwed in, an' Beth's plump as a partridge. An', as far as Elliot, he's ever' bit as big as his father is now, an' Hiram's as sizeable a man as there is in the Valley. Hain't you got ahead of the hounds on your reason, Patty W., when you talk of us two bringin' 'em home?"

"You know what I mean, Coke. An', as to reason, I hain't no reason at all for doin' it. Can't I go by instinct, same as them Quakers goes by the spirit movin' 'em?

When did Quakers get a monopoly on the moving business, anyhow? Now, do as I say, just once."

Coke and Patty stood looking at each other. Without words they understood each other.

The preaching service was not without some shadows of coming events, and they were gloomy ones, for the struggle for supremacy was still going on. But it was on the older members that shadows fell heavily. For children are born care-free, and springtime and youth are blind to shadows.

Between David Lamond and his daughter a faint rift had come. No word had been said. The love between them was not lessened. But when purposes separate, purposes founded on earnest belief and loving interest, the beginning of new ways is set up. It was the nature of Beth's father, having once decided on a course, to stand firm. For his decision was rooted in conscientious belief, and yet he could not just now bring his fatherly will to bear upon his daughter to enforce obedience. Beth went her way, happy, affectionate, but — she went her own way, nevertheless. Craig came often, and the understanding between him and David Lamond grew. Elliot came rarely. But he went often to Lawrence, and found homes welcoming him and smiles awaiting him. And Mrs. Lamond held her peace.

"There 's nothing setter than a Scotchman, unless it might be a Scotch woman. Beth's too near like her father to give up, and she has too much of his own good sense to make a bad hobble. I guess I 'll just keep out of it and bide my time."

Beth and Elliot found themselves guests in the little cabin on the edge of the ravine for a Sabbath dinner of fresh fish and white biscuit, with dandelion greens, and Patty's treasured offering of pickled peaches, saved for

the biggest affairs only. Dinner parties in the early Kansas homes had little of variety or propriety of blending of the dishes offered.

The young people had not met for several weeks, and the joy in their faces may not all have been the mere reflection of the joyous day. Coke and Patty, with the culture bred in loving homely natures, refrained from any hint of noting this, or of good-natured joking and teasing as coarser-fibred people might have done.

At the beginning of the long afternoon, a messenger came hurrying to the cabin.

"The Nethercote baby was worse, and Mrs. Nethercote was in a bad way. Could Coke go post-haste for Dr. St. Felix and Patty stay with Mrs. Nethercote?"

Such was the call, and the Wrens responded, of course, and Beth and Elliot started on their homeward way.

There was no need to hurry, all the golden afternoon was before them, and they had not been together for what seemed to them a long time. So they loitered over the verdant prairie abloom with its rainbow-tinted glory of flowers, and came to the crossing of the Trail by the Hole in the Rock. The placid pool smiled up at them a welcoming peace for the peaceful day. The tender vines trailed over the gray rock, the young leaves cast a lacy shade on the young growths of grass and shrub in the sheltered ravine. The two sat down on the shelving stone by the water's edge.

"What a beautiful romantic spot this is," Beth exclaimed, as she looked at the soft, shadowy waters.

Elliot recalled the night when the storm and cold had threshed upon him here, and that later evening when the storm of a man's unbridled anger had beat upon him. And then he looked at Beth. She was wearing the plaid silk she had worn to the "peace party" at Lawrence.

Its soft hues seemed to blend now into the soft spring-time coloring as they had graced the social function of feminine finery. Her only ornament to-day was a gold locket, hung about her neck by a narrow pink velvet ribbon. Beth was not much given to wearing jewelry, and on the frontier, with its needs and its terrors, and its hardships, jewelry seemed to her in those first years like a cheap adornment.

"Any place looks good to me where you are, Beth," Elliot said.

She did not look up, and he noted how the deeper pink of her cheek harmonized with the gray-green and dark-blue of the Lamond plaid.

"You wore that dress the night of the peace party, didn't you?" he asked.

"Yes, this is my old reliable," she answered. "Official function, or log-cabin Sunday dinner — it is the same."

"But you are not the same," Elliot said.

"Why not?" queried Beth.

"Because at official functions you are not with me," he answered.

"What did Rosalind wear to the party, Elliot?" Beth asked.

"I don't know," Elliot replied.

"I do," Beth said. "It was a light-blue wool, and it was wonderfully becoming, too."

"Oh, I knew that," Elliot said, lazily, as he flung grass blades at the quiet waters.

"How did you know it?"

"Because everything she wears is becoming to her, and I know it, and never notice what it is made of or the color or style."

"Then all I wear is not becoming, or maybe this

isn't, but Craig said that night it was." Beth's eyes were dancing mischievously now.

"I don't know so well about what you wear being becoming," Elliot said. "I know you would become anything you put on, and I always notice exactly what it is, and I think Craig Penwin has good taste to know as much as he does, and good judgment to tell you so."

"I didn't want to go with Craig that night — not so very much, I mean." Beth was breaking up twigs and dropping them into the water, watching the circles widen as they fell.

"Why did you do it, then?" Elliot asked.

"Because papa wanted me to," the girl replied.

"That's why I took Rosalind," Elliot said, meditatively. "Her papa, not mine. *He* likes me." Emphasis on *"he."*

"So does Rosalind; Craig says she does," Beth said.

"I'm glad she does, for I like her, and Craig ought to know. He is there half the time," Elliot said.

"Maybe he likes her himself," Beth suggested.

"I don't think he does, but I think he wants me to like her. He's a magnanimous dog."

"And you accommodate him?"

"Yes, but not in the way he wishes. Rosalind is a charming girl, companionable and interesting to me because she is interested in my work," Elliot explained.

"And in you?"

Elliot made no reply. And Beth's heart gave a great throb. How princely he seemed this glorious afternoon, sure of himself and with the capacity to make proud and glad the heart of any girl. Of all the children who had gone nutting together that October day, none had changed so much as Elliot.

They talked of other things serious and light, uncon-

scious of the passing hours, until the rays of the afternoon sun began to strike horizontal lines into the ravine.

"Are you in a hurry to get home, Beth?" Elliot asked.

"No; why do you ask?" Beth replied.

"Because we may not have another such an afternoon together, and I want to make the most of it," Elliot said.

"Why did you think I would want to hurry home?" Beth's voice was not quite natural.

"I thought Craig might be coming to-night——"

"And if he should be?" Beth interrupted him.

"Why, he'll have to wait. Let's go up the Trail to the sheltering rocks. It is getting warm down here, and later out on the bluff and watch the sunset over the valley."

"And let Craig wait all night?" the girl said, demurely. "But won't you tell me why it may be the last afternoon that we may have together?"

In Beth's deep gray eyes there was an earnestness that the young man could not quite comprehend.

"Not now, Beth. I may tell you later," he said.

The gray eyes did not change, and Elliot could not know how swiftly her mind formed its conclusion. The picture her imagination had made when she saw Rosalind St. Felix bending over little Joe came again unbidden as before. She saw down the long years, when Elliot, a successful physician, would be filling a large place in his community. Beloved, even famous he must be, with his pretty wife Rosalind, who could make a home so homelike. And the wealth of love he would lavish on his wife. What a treasure to covet! Poor Beth!

And all the while they were strolling leisurely along the Trail toward the cool, winding way through the woodland.

"Don't you like the Hole in the Rock, Elliot?" Beth asked.

"Yes, I do now, but I didn't until to-day. Some day I'll tell you why I changed my mind about it," Elliot answered.

They were half way up the slope in the sweet, half-silent wood. A broad, flat stone beside the way seemed to invite to rest awhile, and they sat down upon it. Overhead, the rock shelves, vine-draped, made a picturesque setting for the spot. Down the Trail the afternoon sunlight gleamed golden and grand on the open far prairie. Above them, the same clear glory crowned the bluff. Here was quiet, and cool shadow, and dainty coloring of shrub and budding tree; and all the sweet, woodsy sounds and odors of Nature's blessed places of peace were round about these two, and they were young, and it was the Sabbath-day of a radiant springtime.

Elliot had thrown aside his hat and pushed the dark curls from his white brow with his strong, white hand. Brow and hand would soon be brown with the summer tan of outdoor labor. But to-day, he was every inch a gentleman. Even Craig Penwin, who had the trick of the aristocrat, would not have excelled this young student-farmer, this frontier settler in a yet-to-be conquered land.

Beth glanced up at her companion as he sat silently beside her. She was not vain, but she could not help wondering wherein the charm of little Rosalind might lie that could so win this man whose affection could bring such pride to any woman's soul.

Beth was unconscious of her own winsome grace at that moment. Elliot was not looking at her. How could she know whose image lay back of those eyes looking

out steadily at the Trail winding down to sunny length of waving verdure.

"Elizabeth," Elliot turned to her and gently called her name. "You asked me why this may be our last afternoon together."

"Yes," Beth said. "I wondered why. But I had no right to ask. It is not my place to do that."

"It is your place to ask me anything," and Elliot smiled on her. "Do you remember the day John Brown told us we should have ten years of trouble?"

"Yes; are they beginning?" Beth was smiling now.

"They are begun." Elliot was graver, but not sad.

"I saw John Brown the day Mark and I started to Penwins' together. Mark left me to show him the way to Nethercotes'."

"And you went on alone?"

"Why not? But when I got there Tarleton and Lucy were gone to Palmyra. I think I may have stopped there ten minutes."

"Ten minutes?" Elliot remembered Colonel Penwin's insinuating words, "They were alone for hours together," and he said to himself, "I'm glad I told him he was an infamous liar."

When Beth met Elliot's eyes again, she forgot there had ever been a Rosalind St. Felix. He had folded his hands together, and with gentle tenderness of voice and glance he was saying:

"This may be our last afternoon; I'll tell you why, Beth. Your father gives me every reason to know he does not like me. I am sorry, but I cannot change myself. I hope he may change his mind. I'll not try to change it for him. But, Beth,"—his face was illumined with a wonderful light,—"whatever may happen in this ten years of trouble, one thing has already happened to

me. I have learned to love you, my darling, and in trouble or calm, I could not put you out of my life. I tell you this, knowing you may say in a moment more that you are already promised away, that you cannot care for me, that you dare not slight your father's wishes. I want you to know it. That's all."

Beth sat very still, with downcast eyes. She could not know how marvelously fair were her golden hair and round, pink cheeks, nor how sweet the curve of her full red lips, and clear and firm the outline of her chin, and her white throat,—a woman for men to respect and honor as well as to love.

Lifting her gray eyes, now dark and luminous, with the love-light of youth's happiest hour, she said no word, for words seemed lost to use in her world just then.

And Elliot understood. He opened his arms to her and she let him fold her close, let him lift her face and kiss her now, and toy with the golden hair on her forehead. In wonder, she looked up into his eyes, and timidly she put her hand on his. And for them the miracle of love's completeness came again to bless the world.

The sun was sinking and they went up to the open bluff and sat down on the same log seat of the October nutting time.

"The last time we were here, Craig was with us," Beth said, as she remembered the day.

"The last time I saw you here, Craig was with you. It was a cold, winter day."

"Were you on the white horse that day? What wonderful eyes you have, Elliot." Beth remembered the day that she and Craig had looked out at the snow-draped earth.

It was a land of pure delight now, with the April sunset splendor filling all the west and the soft green and

opal and purple lines of evening illumining the Vinland Valley.

"Beth, my loved one," Elliot said, drawing her to him, "this beautiful, wonderful region will be threshed with storms, and on us who live here sorrow and care and bitter woes may fall. But we shall outlive the storms, we shall grow strong with the strength of overcoming. Only let us be true to each other. What happens then we shall meet fearlessly. We can wait for what the years are to bring. But never more shall we have to wait alone."

He undid the knot of the pink velvet ribbon that held Beth's locket, and in its place he fastened a daintily wrought gold chain.

"Some day, I'll put a locket on it to match the chain," he said. "Wear it anyhow for me. It is an old, old trinket that has been in the Darrow family for years and years."

"May I give you this locket now?" Beth asked, and opening it, her own sweet face smiled out at them. "Papa had it done in Philadelphia last spring. Keep it."

"But I do not want to take your father's gift," Elliot said.

"He said when he gave it to me that I might give it to just one person," and Beth looked down, blushing. "The one who would always care for it. You will care for it, won't you?"

"Always, dearie."

And Beth knew in full measure the joy that she had pictured would be given to Rosalind St. Felix.

The sunset slipped away and the twilight of the rare evening filled the valley with silvery mist and purple shadow.

"Let us sing, Elliot, one goodnight song before we go."

"Must days like this come to an end?" he asked. "Then let them end in song," and together they sang.

It was the Sabbath, the time for sacred things, and they had forgotten that the world held any other soul than theirs in that holy twilight hour. So they did not note the coming, the waiting beyond the evergreen clump, and the passing of a rider on a red roan horse,—a splendid military figure with head erect and fierce, angry eyes that scowled upon the two unconscious of his presence.

Far out over the Vinland Valley, their voices floated in the old, old hymn of twilight peace and beauty.

> Abide with me. Fast falls the eventide.
> The darkness deepens, Lord, with me abide.
> When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
> Oh Thou that changest not, Abide with me.

Then together, in the soft evening shadows, they went down the old Trail and along the by-way to the stone cabin home of David Lamond.

CHAPTER XVIII

PRAIRIE PIRATES

Not in vain a heart will break
Not a tear for Freedom's sake
Falls unheeded: God is true.

— Whittier.

HOW shall chisel, brush, or pen record a story first made with bullet, sword, and fire-brand? The spring sunshine breathed out its blessing. The prairies smiled serenely in their happy peacefulness. Above them swam a dreamy haze. Upon their broad expanses the untamed beauty of the wilderness spread itself luxuriantly. No fierce wild beast lay in waiting to kill; no miasmal marsh polluted the air with its fever poison, and no savage barbarian race hungered to destroy. The Kansas struggle that was waged in that fair springtime — waged with unparalleled ferocity on the one hand, and with unbreakable endurance on the other — was not the old-time struggle for existence with natural foes. Rather was it a fight for a National ideal. The ideal upon which the American Colonies, three-quarters of a century ago, had founded a Constitution, organized a Government, and flung to the winds of the Western Continent its symbol in a banner of red and white, with its starry field of blue. The ideal that all men are created free.

With the coming of spring came the tide of immigration. One influx was from the Northern States, and the hardships for the newcomers began before they even set foot in the new kingdom of the West. Missouri became

a savage gantlet to every opponent of human slavery who sought to reach the Kansas Territory. From St. Louis to Westport transportation was denied or obtained at exorbitant cost. Baggage was damaged or destroyed, and every comfort withheld, not only from men who were unaccustomed to hardships themselves, but from frail women and innocent babes. And in the ears of these were hourly poured the threats of violence to come, and the utter annihilation of all Kansas Free-State settlements. And yet these sturdy people came hither and began to fill the valleys and spread out westward along the billows of the green prairies.

There was another force for occupation sweeping in on the same steamers, along the same trails, and on to the same fertile lands, to have and to hold them for its own. Its people came up from the Southern States, some to escape from slave-ridden regions, some to improve their fortunes, some in sincerity to make homes and widen the domain of Southern ideas. But the great majority, overshadowing all the others combined, came to seize the land by lawless force and to depopulate it by brute ferocity. These things are history, not fiction.

So, to the beautiful land, with its rippling waves of verdure, these prairie pirates came without conscience, justice, or pity. Nor brush, nor pen, nor chisel can portray the things of their handiwork. Nay, even the full measure of it cannot be comprehended by the imagination in this day of peaceful prosperity, when old prejudices are laid aside and old animosities forgotten. In the springtime of that year of our Lord eighteen hundred fifty-six, it was not an imaginary condition, but a terribly real problem that faced the Kansas people and called for their judgment, courage, endurance, and unwavering faith in God Omnipotent.

In this springtime, the Vinland Valley took on a less lonely but no less lovely countenance. Palmyra was a Free-State village, and along the Santa Fé Trail east and west the Free-State folk found homestead claims to their liking. But Colonel Boniface Penwin was right when he assured his children in the autumn before that Georgia and the other Southern commonwealths would soon send neighbors of the Penwin type for their association.

On the morning after Colonel Penwin had halted his horse behind the evergreen clump and listened to Elliot and Beth singing in the Sabbath twilight, he came radiantly before his family.

"I have good news for all of us," he declared. "Major Buford, of Alabama, has come with three hundred men from Alabama and South Carolina and Georgia. They have settled one camp down toward the southeast. I expect to see Buford to-day. I told you six months ago we would soon have the right kind of people here. You'll not be lonely and need those trashy Abolition young folks for associates much longer."

Lucy and Tarleton looked down and said nothing, while Craig remarked, indifferently:

"I saw a man in Palmyra yesterday who said Roxbury, of Atlanta, is with Buford."

"The man who wanted to marry Aunt Lucy?" Lucy asked, innocently.

And Tarley, looking at his sister, added:

"Our Lucy looks nearer like auntie every day, don't she, papa?"

He was too young to note the gray color of his father's face, although he did miss the smile he wanted. But if he was too young, Craig was not. And Colonel Penwin avoided looking at his eldest son.

"Let 's not talk about that," Lucy said, with more tact, and then the meal was ended in silence.

"Craig, I want to see you a minute," the Colonel said, when the family had separated.

Craig followed his father out of doors and they stood beside the cabin for a few minutes' conference.

"How are you prospering in your game?" Colonel Penwin asked, jocosely.

Craig's face flushed, and an angry light was in his eyes.

"It is not a game, father; it is a life purpose with me now," he answered, in a low voice.

"Of course, of course, I was only joking; but I can give you some information worth having, and some advice you will do well to heed. I learned its wisdom by harder knocks. You must be sensible and take it from me."

"Well?" Craig assented.

"First, I must speak of some other things."

There was an undue emphasis on the word *must*. "You say Roxbury is here? Confound him! Craig, he is the man whom I wanted to be rid of when I came to Kansas."

"He is? I thought he was in love with Aunt Lucy." Craig's eyes were fixed on his father's face.

Colonel Penwin was ready this time and gave no sign of emotion, but spoke calmly.

"What I want to say is this: You are to know nothing of him nor his dealings with our family. Do not let anybody know you ever heard his name before. Who told you about him up at Palmyra?"

"The man who lives in that little cabin, the last one on the Trail, this side of town. It was nearly hidden with grass in the Fall. You remember it, don't you?"

The Colonel did remember it, and he added:

"Roxbury's agent, Jack Bobbs, of Atlanta, owns that place. Who lives there?"

"I don't know," Craig replied, "and I don't care to know Roxbury here, either. You needn't force that on me. But, Father, every time I am in Lawrence I see Roxbury's Jupe."

"Well, see him if you want to; you have nothing to do with him," and Penwin, off his guard again, found his anger showing itself.

"No," Craig answered, "but I wondered if Roxbury would claim him here. He passes for a free man in Lawrence."

"He is a free man," Penwin fairly shouted the words. "Let him alone."

"All right, father; go on," Craig said, composedly.

The Colonel waited long enough to get a grip on himself, then he said quietly:

"Craig, I told you once that you had a powerful force to combat when you crossed purposes with Elliot Darrow. Now I know it ever more truly than I did then. And I know further that you cannot outdo him by coercion. Keep still."

Craig had opened his lips to protest.

"You may call yourself 'Craig Penwin, gentleman,' and you may call Elliot Darrow by any name you choose. It will not change matters any. And if you are wise, you will listen to me. You can refuse to do it and to follow my advice if you want to. It all rests with you."

In spite of Craig's pride, he could not fail to see the father still pleading for a son in Colonel Penwin's face, although the older man would not have had it appear so.

"I'm listening," Craig said.

"Then remember this: You will win what you want. But you must do it by stratagem and seeming good-will.

Never by abuse. It won't work. You must lay aside your scruples and with a pleasing front——"

"Stoop to deceit and trickery. I've already begun," Craig said, bitterly.

"Then keep it up, but don't frown,—smile. When a young man gets to that place his battle has been far more than half won."

"You give strange advice for a man who joins himself to Jeff Buford and entangles his affairs with Jason Roxbury, gambler, of Atlanta, Georgia. I don't wonder Aunt Lucy refused him," and Craig turned from his father and went into the house.

A little later Colonel Penwin was on the bluff overlooking Vinland Valley, where by appointment he was to meet Major Buford, who awaited him there. The two took in the view of the prairie, and Penwin noted the increasing number of claims taken even since the first days of spring.

"It's all an Abolitionist settlement, Buford," Penwin declared. "And they are striking deep roots. You can't pull them up too early."

"Mark them out for me, Colonel," Buford said, as his eyes traveled along from cabin to cabin.

"On the edge of the ravine up stream is Coke Wren, Yankee, and his wife. Only two."

Buford made note of this in his book.

"Good. They will do to start with. Our fellows fixed Brown at Leavenworth with hatchets. See?" The Colonel nodded, and went on.

"Around the shoulder of the bluff on a crooked trail is Nethercote, a Michigan man, wife and baby. Nethercote is away a good deal."

"All right," Buford entered the name. "One of my men has sworn to kill an Abolitionist man, if he can, and

if he can't, he'll kill a woman, and if he can't do that, he'll kill a child. That's the spirit of my men, sir."

"Up on the hilltop in that bunch of evergreens, where a little tower sticks up is the worst of the valley, a Quaker from Indiana. Won't fight and won't run. Don't smile; Hiram Darrow won't run."

"All the better sport then," Buford declared. "We'll burn him out, brand his wife and turn out the little children naked to find their way to Indiana."

"There are no little children," the Colonel hastened to say. "But put in the blackest letters you can make the name of Elliot Darrow. If you miss everybody else to get him, do it."

"It shall be done," Major Buford said. "Now, whose place is that hidden by the timber? I see a smoke over there?"

He pointed toward the Lamond homestead, hidden save for the rising smoke above it. At the same moment a powerful man riding a big horse came toward them from the east, where the Trail wound through the woodland.

"Good morning, Roxbury. Colonel Penwin," Buford said.

Roxbury halted beside Buford, but offered no hand to Penwin. He was of the gambler type, with marks of dissipation written on his face. Buford noticed the lack of courtesy and growled out:

"Oh, Roxbury, I forgot you and Penwin had had a tiff. Suppose both of you put that aside till we clean up Kansas. After the spoils are divided, you'll feel so good and be so rich you won't care to fuss any more. Finish this job now."

The two men seemed to acquiesce, and Penwin looked again toward Lamonds'."

"That's David Lamond's, a Scotchman of the Bruce

and Wallace type. Ought to have been shot a long time ago. But, as to his home, you 'll spare that, Buford, for the sake of his daughter, a beautiful girl. You hear me? Whoever touches that place reckons with me, on account of my son," he added, as he caught Roxbury's eye.

"Since when did your feelings for your family get so tender, Bonny Penwin," Roxbury asked, disdainfully. "You don't need money as bad as you did once, I suppose. When you were losing everything in the gambling parlors in Atlanta, you would have pledged your grandmother, or your wife, or — *your sister.*"

Roxbury hissed the last two words at Penwin, with venomous scorn, but Buford suddenly burst out with an oath at the beginning and ending of his speech.

"You two let each other alone, or I 'll list you both here. If you think there 's anything slack about Buford, of Alabama, you 'll change what little minds you have left when I 'm through. I 've set this Lamond house on the right side of the page. Now go on."

And the Vinland Valley, with this one exception, was given over to the mercy of the prairie pirates. As Buford started away, Roxbury said:

"I 'll overtake you before you get far."

"All right, Roxbury, but don't either one be a fool. There 's bigger concerns than any old grudge you 've got. Be patriots, and stand up for your country." And he rode away, leaving the patriots together.

"Where is Jupe now, Penwin?" Roxbury asked.

"Who told you he was here?" Penwin inquired.

"Jack Bobbs, when he came home last November. Bobbs settled this side of Palmyra, you know, in a little grass-covered box of a cabin." The gambler looked meaningly at Penwin, as he said this.

"Have you sold Jupe again?" he asked, insinuatingly.

"No, sir, Jupe isn't mine to sell. He's up at Lawrence, and he says he's a free man. You pledged him back to me, and I have no claim on him now. He's free. You'd better not fool with him, either. He's got the strength of a tiger in his fist."

"Where's his wife, now?" Roxbury asked, smoothly.

"She's dead. Paid the penalty of a crime." Penwin's face was gray as it had been that day when he watched the bubbles on the pool of the Hole in the Rock.

"Whose crime was it, may I ask?" Roxbury's voice was oily in its softness.

Boniface Penwin turned upon him with a tigerish fierceness.

"You heard what Major Buford said to us. Wait till we settle this Territory. Then we'll settle this matter," and with a horrible oath, he turned his horse to the Trail and rode madly away.

Buford and Roxbury, pursuing their course at a gallop, soon overtook a group of a dozen men on the Trail, leading four unmounted horses among them. They were a villainous crew to look upon, a rough, sneering, swaggering bunch of dare-devils. Most of them were young men, large of frame, dressed in coarse clothes, and all armed with guns, pistols, and bowie knives.

"There's Jack Bobbs; count on him to raise hell and put a chunk under it," Roxbury said to Major Buford, as the two reached the company.

The whisky bottles passed from one coarse, tobacco-stained mouth to another, with boasting and swearing in the interludes.

Jack Bobbs rode alongside Buford's horse for a word with his leader.

"We come onto two new settlers, young men and their families, down the Trail five miles back," he said.

"The men said they was on their way to their claims west a little distance. 'We hope you are Free-State men,' I said, just to fool them.

"'That's what we are,' one man said, and the other said he'd like to see any Pro-Slavery man try to stop him. So we stopped 'em both right then. Two of the boys burnt their wagons, goods, and all. We took their horses and told the women to walk back to Massachusetts quick. There was two babies in the crowd, and one of the boys suggested they could drop 'em into the Missouri River if they was heavy. Said they'd better poison the fishes than to grow any more Abolition dogs in this Territory."

A roar of laughter followed this brutal recital. Then with oaths and foul and cruel jests the rabble pursued its way to other deeds of like fiendishness. For Major Buford had come hither with this brutal gang to drive out or assassinate all Free-State men; and if outraged, branded women and naked starving children, robbed of husbands and fathers, and plundered of all their possessions, should be left beside the smoking embers of their cabin houses, it mattered nothing to him. He and his kind were the vicious product that can grow only in a slave-accursed land. Such a land these men had sworn to make out of the sun-kissed prairies of the virgin West. And this fair April morning saw the work of their hands establishing itself.

"What's the next number on the program, Bobbs?" Roxbury asked as the band turned up a narrow path toward a bit of wood beside the creek.

"Oh, one of the men made a wager this morning he'd kill a Free-State man before night. There's an old fellow living alone up here. His wife died — froze to death, I guess, last winter. He's sick and no harm to nobody,

but he 's a bitter anti. We 'll just rid the country of him and win a bet beside."

And on they went. At the door of the cabin a white-haired, thin-faced man sat drinking in the sunshine and soft morning air.

"If this weather keeps up, I 'll be working in my garden," he was saying to someone who was moving about inside the cabin.

The men dashed up to the doorstep.

"Are you a Free-State man?" the foremost rider thundered out.

"Yes, sir," the feeble voice came without a quaver. Then as he saw the quick gleam of pistols, he cried to the one inside, "Run, Mark! run!"

A scream of agony and the old form lay in a quivering heap on the step. But Mark did not run. He never could tell why, for he was pallid with fear. He stood up over the dying man, believing his time had come. And in that moment, the daring spirit that was born in him asserted itself.

"You miserable wild beasts, you hyenas, to shoot down a helpless old man," he cried.

A revolver snapped fruitlessly, and Bobbs flung up his hand.

"Don't, boys, not now," he said. "That 's that Quaker, Darrow's boy."

"But they are all to go," Buford interrupted.

"I say not now, Buford. Listen to me."

So with a volley of bullets all about him, but not one aimed at him, they rode away, leaving Mark beside the dying man. What wonder that the iron entered the soul of the young Quaker boy then and that, daring, impulsive, and young, in that hour beside the martyred dead, he should vow to give his life in battle against this bloody

force that knew no law, save the blood-lust of unbridled ferocity.

"What's your soft dough now, Bobbs?" Roxbury asked, as they hit the main Trail again.

"I ain't liftin' no hand against that boy so long as Bonny Penwin is agin him," Bobbs replied, in a low voice. "Somebody'll git him yit, of course, but him and his little brother rousted me out of my cabin this side of Palmyra just in time to save my life last October. They was on their way to a preachin' up to the hotel, an' they runs in like two boys, an' says, easy like, 'Come, go to church with us.' I just went along to be a boy for a minute again, for I was lonesome. If I'd staid in that grass-hid shanty, I'd been a dead man that day. You'll git the whole bunch of Darrows; you'll have to sooner or later, for you can't scare 'em, and they ought to be got, but between me and you, Roxbury, I ain't workin' to pay Bonny Penwin's debts to the cause of slavery by hittin' folks he wants hit."

As the men sped on their way, they came face to face with Craig Penwin, whom Buford halted with the query:

"Who are you?"

"My name is Penwin," Craig replied; then, with infinite insolence of tone, he drawled, "If you courageous heroes who murder men and turn out women and children to perish, want an aim for your bullets, try me. I am every inch a Southerner"—how proudly he sat his horse before them!—"but I'd rather kill myself, I'd rather die a hundred deaths than to be known as one of you. Now, shoot, if you dare."

For the sake of the girl he loved, Craig could stoop to trickery, but he was not yet a coward.

"Oh, he's Colonel Penwin's son, saucy and daring, but 'sound on the goose.' Let him alone," Jack Bobbs said.

"I've got nothing against the boy. It's Bonny Penwin I'm after," he added in a lower tone to Roxbury.

Craig passed on his way and the men went theirs, land pirates, filling their hours with deeds of lawlessness and cruelty of which this morning's work was typical.

Mark Darrow walked into the house like an old man when he came home, and his mother read his face with a sinking heart, for she saw that he had passed from boyhood into manhood, and in her wisdom she knew that her second son would act with a man's power, but with the unripe judgment of an impulsive boy.

The two helpless settlers' wives whom Buford's men bereft of all save their little children found their way to Coke Wren's cabin on the edge of the ravine.

"Could you give us a drink of water and some food for the children?" they asked, in piteous tones, afraid lest another blow should fall on them, over-buffeted now with misery.

"I want to know," Patty cried. "Come right in and tell me what brought you here without no men folks."

They sat down on the cabin doorstep and told their heart-breaking story. To Patty the story of brutal acts had become so common that she had thought herself under control. And yet she sniffled, and dabbed at her eyes, and shook her fists, and tried by all available means to keep from breaking down entirely at the recital of bereavement and horror.

"I want to know," she said, with pretended composure at last. "You come right into this cabin and stay till you git your souls back into your bodies, what's been nigh wrenched outen of 'em. Oh, it's big enough for all of us. I've always lived in a rubber house that'd stretch itself for to cover the poor and afflicted."

Her bright little black eyes were shining through her

tears as she brought them all, two women and two little babies, into the tiny cabin. "You can't live here and not learn how to meet most anything."

Homely was the little figure, and with only the rudest of frontier necessities about her, but her hard little hands were deft and swift, and her plain face wore all the beauty a loving heart and an irrepressible, cheery spirit can give.

"Me and Cokey ain't got nobody but our two selves," she chirped, as she soothed her stricken guests. "An' the Lord just favors us by lettin' us help where we can. We did n't git beauty ner riches to our share, ner no special amount of book knowledge. Se He made it up to us in givin' us friends and the quality of endurin'—we can live on bird-seed ef we need to,—and we ain't neither of us afraid none. An' that's a blessin' in this part of His footstool."

The next afternoon there was a double funeral at the Wren claim, and two young men who thirty-six hours before had been full of life and hope and high purposes lay still and pallid beside the cabin door, awaiting their last earthly couch deep under the blossoming prairie-sod. David Lamond read the Scripture lesson of the hour, the ninetieth Psalm. Hiram Darrow offered the prayer, deep, fervent, tender, ending with the note of sublimest victory:

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

And Elliot sang for the two widowed ones the comforting lines of that sorrow-soothing hymn:

> Jesus, Lover of my soul,
> Let me to Thy bosom fly.

sang in a voice so fraught with sympathy and tenderness that even the stern-hearted Scotchman hid his eyes to conceal the tears.

Nobody knew just how it happened that Beth staid in the cabin with the fatherless little ones, while the burial was made a mile away, nor why Elliot was left on guard there, with the older people following the mourners to the last rites. Nobody, unless it may have been Patty Wren, and she never had reasons for her doing, more than the birds. One of the children was sleeping sweetly, and Beth was rocking the other baby and singing softly to it, when Doctor St. Felix came swiftly up to the cabin. Elliot was sitting in the rear door, looking at Beth, who in her zeal to quiet the little one was hardly conscious of his presence. But St. Felix saw the whole picture, and paused a moment before he spoke.

"Darrow," he said, in a quiet tone. "Get on your horse and ride to Nethercotes' as fast as you can. I'll go after Nethercote. He's at the burial, I suppose," and he turned away.

Elliot came to Beth's chair.

"Shall I leave you here alone?" he asked, gently, bending over her.

She looked up timidly.

"Yes, Elliot. What can be the matter?"

"I don't know." Elliot still hesitated, and he bent closer, and put his hand caressingly on hers. "I do not want to leave you."

"I am not afraid, and I am well. Mrs. Nethercote is sick. Go to their cabin and see what's wrong."

Elliot touched her golden hair reverently. She looked so like a Madonna with the sweet-faced baby nestling close against her bosom. A thrill of joy possessed him as he thought down the long years of a future wherein Beth should be his household angel, the light of his fireside, and his face was transfigured as he turned to leave

her. Doctor St. Felix, who had come back to give a word to Elliot, saw all this. There was a strange look in his black eyes as he turned away again, and, leaving the word unsaid, he hurried on.

With all speed Elliot made his way to the Nethercote cabin, hidden around the shoulder of the bluff by the crooked trail. It may have been the thought of Beth that clung in his mind as he hurried along that made the sight that met his gaze more terrible to him as he rounded the last turn in the trail and came to the Nethercote homestead. It was a secluded spot, not easy to find, tucked away in the shelter of low bluffs, shaded with low timber, and opening toward the rocky banks of a little stream.

It had seemed a romantic place to Mrs. Nethercote when her husband had first showed her the cabin hidden among the burr oak and elms. But the frail young mother with her sickly baby had found the frontier a harsh land, redeemed only by the kindness of sympathetic neighbors, who lifted many burdens for her. Her husband had gone to-day to assist these neighbors in the double funeral, the result of the tragedy of the morning before. He did not tell his wife of the event for fear of exciting her, but he knew men were needed, not for company, but for service, in these frontier funerals, and he had received so many favors from these neighbors he would at least help them to lift the heavy coffins and shovel the earth upon them.

Doctor St. Felix was responding to an urgent call for his services, when he met a group of villainous looking men on the crooked trail. He scented trouble in their very air, and, hurried as he was, courteously asked them a question or two. The result was for him to rush to the nearest cabin for aid. This happened to be Coke Wren's.

When Elliot, on little Cotton Mather, rushed up the crooked trail into sight of the Nethercote cabin, the flames were bursting from the roof, while rioting in scattered household furniture three men were busily searching for valuable loot. A fourth was in the act of driving a cow from the already burning stable. And the fifth man? The picture of Beth with the Madonna look in her eyes as she cuddled the baby in her arms; the sacred beauty of the thought in the young man's mind that put a halo about her head in the thinking; the joy in the memory of the Sabbath-day just past when he had told her of his love, and she had let him hold her in his arms and give her a lover's kiss — with all these — the fifth man?

Mrs. Nethercote, speechless with terror, with her unconscious infant in her arms, was struggling in the foul embrace of the fifth man. To Elliot Darrow in that moment the shock was more terrible than the sight of deliberate murder would have been. For an instant he stood motionless. Then, leaping from his horse, he bounded toward the struggling woman. All the force of the moral courage that through a long line of Quaker ancestry had nerved itself to resistance of evil, to endurance of ridicule, to submission, to torture; all the unbreakable power of will and tenacity to a belief; all the heroism that faces martyrdom, but will not yield a hair's breadth for conscience' sake — these gathered now in physical form and spent themselves in the blow of Elliot Darrow's steel fist. It fell like a sledge on the head of the lecherous ruffian holding the horror-stricken woman clasping her dying child. The villain loosed his hold and fell, sprawling and unconscious, in the midst of his plundering confederates a dozen feet away.

Mrs. Nethercote gave Elliot one look and sank fainting

beside her lifeless baby. To the day of his death, Elliot Darrow never forgot that look. Its expression was on her face the next day, although her eyes were closed then to open no more on scenes of earthly strife and rescue. It spoke even to those who saw her then, but to none others as to the young Quaker did it express the joy of escape, the sudden opening of heaven's gates to one on the brink of destruction, the gratitude, the inexpressible thankfulness, the peace of supreme protection. One long gaze and the young wife and mother sank down unconscious.

The three men, bewildered by the sudden headlong plunge of their comrade upon them, staggered to their feet. A white-faced, terrible figure towered over them. He was unarmed, yet by that mind mastery that is the conqueror's surest weapon, in his utter fearlessness, he charged upon them, as if the strength of ten men were his. And it must have been.

"You villains! You murderers! You unspeakable wretches!" he cried, as he swooped down upon them, dealing out blow on blow. There were three of them, each with two revolvers that he knew how to use, and their single antagonist was a Quaker who believed in peace. But they fell back before him, and one man shouted wildly for Bill. Bill, who had been firing the stable and driving off the cow, had disappeared at the first noise. He was the same man who had fled before Elizabeth Lamond's commanding voice on that winter morning in the ravine with Patty Wren.

The men had rallied enough to seize their unconscious comrade and drag him toward their horses, when Nethercote and Coke Wren covered the last turn in the Trail. In the horror of the time Wren and Elliot thought only of their stricken neighbor, and the ruffians plunged down

the creek bank and hid their retreat in the brush of the ravine.

A second time the little Wren cabin opened its door to the dead and the bereaved living.

"Better here 'n any place else," Patty said, consolingly. "We 're nearder 'n anybody else, an' Darrowses took one widow an' her baby, an' Lamonds took 't other till they can git theirselfs sorter together an' begin to live. It would n't do for them women to be with this now, nohow. Them prairie pirates may make this a land of terror. But the Good Bein' ain't asleep. An' they 'll come a day of vengeance. Seems to me it 's most due." And the stout-hearted little Yankee clasped her hands as if to clutch her patience a little longer, pending the coming of that day.

CHAPTER XIX

THE REIGN OF TERROR

God's ways seem dark, but, soon or late,
They touch the shining hills of day;
The evil cannot brook delay.
The good can well afford to wait.

— Whittier.

APRIL was slipping on toward May. With the ripening of the season, the springtime wore a lovelier grace. And through all these gracious days the work of the prairie pirates in the Vinland Valley was the counterpart of the history-making in the lowlands of eastern Kansas, upon its rugged river bluffs, and on every level plain; and the hatred and ferocity of it all are things incomprehensible in these days of law and freedom under a blood-bought flag of peace and power.

Against this lawless piracy the settlers had maintained only a position of self-defence for life and liberty, and a steadfast adherence to the principles that prompted their home-making in Kansas. True, there were tricky politicians and adventurers, demagogs and outlaws, who in the name of Free-State partisanship brought dishonor and disaster to a cause they claimed to defend. They are among "the poor" that the Scriptures say we have always with us. But they formed only a tiny per cent of the Free-State settlers in the growing villages and scattered rural freeholds.

The first quarter of the year of 1856 had seen a strange and atrocious record made along the Missouri River

borders and inland westward. Men tarred and feathered and set adrift on rafts in the river, men chopped in the face with hatchets and left to perish in the freezing cold; mutilated men flung dying into their homes, whose wives became maniacs from the sight of them; houses burned, with all clothing and bedding, leaving helpless women and naked children alone on the cold, desolate prairie in the desolate midnight hour; men forced to flee for their lives, and, under promise of protection, cut down as they ran — these deeds and those too vile to set on record, unbelievable now for their demoniac fiendishness, are a part of the history-making of those days of peril and power. For power went with this criminal horde of prairie pirates.

And the Law shook hands with Crime.

The President of the United States, the military authority at Washington, the weak-willed Governor of Kansas, the civil officers of the Territory, all joined hands with the prairie pirates, who under the law and the flag were daily enforcing with bullet, sword, and fire-brand the policy of Free-State extermination.

The Missouri River was blockaded to transportation. And for those shut in the Territory proscribed for their fearless declaration of opinion or their determination to maintain their common rights,— for such as these — God's pity on them!

For their own defence and for the protection of their loved ones; for the common justice and common welfare; for the sake of freedom and the flag they loved and honored; and for that nobler principle, world-wide in its scope, the principle of the enfranchisement of human slavery and the God-given claim to life, liberty, and the

pursuit of happiness — for the maintenance of these things there was builded up in these days a wall of men on Kansas soil; men who were defending with brain and brawn the land they had come hither to preserve; men who were welding into the State its imperishable ideals. Their life story is the story of this commonwealth, and their types stand in these pages. With the political acumen of Doctor Robinson and Colonel Lane, conservative and radical elements in government, were those forces typified by the courage of John Speer, the statesmanship of Winthrop Merriford, the loyalty and endurance of David Lamond, and the scholarly ideals of Hiram Darrow.

Beyond these a power, not yet reckoned with in this Maytime of sunny days and shadow-darkened deeds, a force undreamed of then was ripening up for swift and tremendous action. It was the power to forecast afar the world-trend of events, held by a common-looking settler on the Osawatomie, John Brown. Buford had already made his boast that he had come to Kansas to clear out the Brown settlement and to shoot the Abolition dogs on sight, and John Brown had taken his surveying instruments and run a line through Buford's camp in order to meet him and to find what manner of man it was who had come hither to kill the Browns. Unknown to Buford, John Brown walked in and out of the Southerners' camp and talked to its commander and his men and gathered their purposes against him first-hand.

Such were the men in this wall of defence, and such the odds against them. And the days of the reign of terror told off the rosary of the beautiful springtime.

In April Winthrop Merriford returned to Kansas.

"I must go South soon," he told his wife. "Osborne

Junior, of the firm of Osborne and Osborne, is already there doing all that can be done now."

"Where's Neil? I thought it was Osborne, Merriford and Osborne, with Neil's name in the middle," Emily Merriford said.

"It was once," her husband replied. "Neil's name is out now."

"Where is he?" The wife looked fondly sympathetic.

"He is lost, Emily. When I settle things here and get a line from Osborne Junior, I will go to Atlanta."

But before these things were done a price was set on Winthrop Merriford's head; his wife and children had need for him at home, while Jupe, big, patient, stupid Jupe, so far broke his bonds as to declare:

"Mars'r Merriford, 'fore you're ready to go Souf, I'll be so near a free man I kin keep you all here. You trus' me an' see."

"How does your name happen to be Roxbury, Jupe?" Merriford asked, as the two were busy putting the office in order after the lawyer's return.

"My las' Mars'r's name, sah," Jupe replied. "Er — pretty near the las' one, sah."

"Why not use the last one, then?" Merriford asked.

"'Cause, sah,— I ain't breakin' no oath, 'cause I never swore not to answer ef I was axed,—'cause, sah. I's so 'shamed of my las' mars'r, I don't want to be named after him ner be counted no kin to him. He's a disgrace to me, sah. He shore is."

"There's a Roxbury, of Atlanta, grand right supporter of this Major Buford, south of here," the lawyer said, meditatively.

"Yes, sah, he's my man. He's my Roxbury, shore he is," Jupe declared.

"And who was your last master? Buford?" Merriford asked. "I don't blame you for disowning him."

"No, sah; worse 'n him, worse 'n him. Hit was Colonel Boniface Penwin, sah."

The lawyer gave no sign of surprise, because he had schooled himself to meet surprises. After a little while he asked:

"Are you sure you don't belong to him now? How did you get your freedom?"

The negro was fully six feet and three inches tall, and his evenly distributed weight was two hundred fifty pounds. He turned on Merriford with the fierceness of a tiger at bay, and he looked like a giant.

"Is I shore? Is I shore? 'Fore Almighty God, I is shore. Eternally an' everlastin', shore. He gives his word ef I keep still; I gives my word ef he keeps still. That's my bondage, what I ain't yet free from."

"Are you sure he'll keep his word? I'd want more than a promise from Penwin, although down deep he has the makings of a gentleman."

"He was one once," Jupe said, sadly. "Gamblin' undone him, root an' branch, down to Roxbury's in Atlanta. He done sold hisself for money. He did."

"But will he keep his promise to you?" Merriford insisted.

Jupe was the tiger again at the words.

"Will he keep it?" he growled, fiercely. "You watch him everlastin'ly keep it. He not breaken that one oath. You'll see. When I git out of bondage, I won't keepen no word, but he will."

There seemed no continuity of thought in Jupe's mind, for presently, with true African lightness of heart, he said, with a grin:

"Golly! golly! Mars'r Merriford, hit's a good day to

go fishin'." Meditatively, "Wonder how they'd bite in the Kaw?" And as an afterthought, "Ef Coke Wren comes up, tell him to go fishin' where I done told him to last winter, and do it when the bitin''s good."

The biting seemed to have been good that day, at least Coke Wren thought so, for, with a day's lull in the Vinland Valley, Coke went fishing.

"I do believe, Patty, I'll take a little time off this afternoon, ef I was sure we'd not have to turn our cabin into a morgue again 'fore night. Seems like we'll never have enough clean linen to cover that corner no more." Coke pointed to the darkest, coolest corner of the cabin, as if it were a shrine.

Patty looked across, reverently.

"Yes, Cokey, that's the sacred place in this little home, and we consecrate it to our martyred dead. Let's be thankful we had a place to shelter them martyrs an' could give a grain of comfort to them pore widows an' Mr. Nethercote."

"I am thankful, and likewise I'm most tuckered out. I'll do no good now till I git away by myself an' commune a little," and Coke's eyes glistened.

"Well, go fishin', Cokey. It'll do your heart good as well as both our stomachs. I wish Beth an' Elliot could come over an' help eat your ketch," Patty said, as she hustled about the cabin. "I see Elliot and Mark going up the Trail yesterday. My, but them two boys is broadened out an' heightened up in a year's time in Kansas."

Then, as Patty's eye fell on her husband, sitting listlessly in the doorway, she added, "Run along an' do your fishin' while the bitin's good."

And Coke obeyed.

Sauntering down the ravine, thinking of the events

of the days wherein one woe not only did tread upon another's heels, but woes went side by side with fellow woes, Coke's mind ran on to Winthrop Merriford and to the mystery surrounding his son Neil. As his eye caught sight of a still place in the stream, the purpose of his errand and his thought seemed to overlap, and the little Yankee stood still, looking at the quiet water.

"He told me to do it an' I forgot, stupid, biled owl that I am. The Hole in the Rock! That's where he told me to go, the dumb, grinnin' Senegambian! That's where I'll go this blessed minute. Fer what? Why, fer fish, of course. He wrote it the 'O' in the Rock. Well, a 'O' is a hole, or there's a hole in a 'O,' an' ef it's the Rock it 'mounts to the same thing."

Coke had hardly gotten out of sight, when a posse of men, led by Sheriff Jones, came cutting the sod of the little path to the cabin on the edge of the ravine. Patty saw them through the window, and her heart stood still, for she saw among them the same coward Bill who had met her and Beth Lamond in the ravine near Lawrence on the December morning. And with the memory of that hour came the picture of Mrs. Nethercote with her baby, now in the newest grave of the growing number in the praîrie graveyard. She sprang behind the door, and, lifting her hands in prayer, she murmured, quaintly:

"Dear Lord, ef You really meant it when You said You'd cover us with Your feathers, and under Your wings we could trust, cover me now what's got nary other feather, nor Cokey to protect me. An' ef You did n't mean it, Lord, make me a first-class martyr, a real, first-class one, what's not afraid!"

Patty stepped to the open door and in her face was that light which the world cannot give nor take away. Sheriff Jones was in front, and beyond him were Buford,

Roxbury, and Colonel Penwin, with Jack Bobbs and a half dozen more of his caste.

"Is Coke Wren here?" Jones asked, gruffly.

"No, ma'am! I mean, no, sir," Patty replied, meekly, smoothing a wrinkle ironed into her clean apron. "We ain't sowed nothin' yet but our garden stuff — lettuce an'——"

"I said, is Coke Wren here?" Jones repeated, in even a harsher tone.

"Oh, no, sir. Excuse me. I thought you was askin' did we sow grain here. I'm a little deef. We hain't had no rain here——"

A third time the question was put, and Patty, understanding now, said smilingly, "Oh, no, Mr. Wren ain't here. Won't you come in and wait for him?"

Under her breath she murmured, "Oh, Lord, what a bluffer I be! Forgive me, Lord, you know my hearin' ain't real good."

"Where is your husband, madam?" Penwin asked in a calm voice, and Patty heard clearly, for she answered, though at random, "He's gone fishin' down to the Hole in the Rock."

Patty thought she was lying glibly. Penwin wheeled his horse suddenly.

"Come on and get the others, Jones; he'll keep. We'll see him later," he said, in a low voice. And for one as deaf as Patty Wren, his words were quite distinctly comprehended.

When they were away, scurrying toward the main Trail, Patty stood questioning herself. "Shall I go hunt for Cokey? No, I won't. The Good Bein' can take care of him ef he's worth carin' for, same as He does of me, what ain't near as good and valuable as Cokey is. Men depends a little too much on the women an' too little on

the Lord here in Kansas, sometimes. After this day, Patty Wren, I'll never doubt the lovin' grace of the Heavenly Father, an' I'll take what comes."

Meanwhile, Jones and his party rode furiously toward the claim of David Lamond. In the woods out of sight, Boniface Penwin halted.

"You go on and serve your writs, Jones," he said. "I'll wait for you here."

Jones would have protested, but Major Buford interfered with oaths that Penwin knew his business. David Lamond was plowing long, clean furrows in the prairie sod, watching the blossoms he must turn under and thinking of Burns' mountain daisy and field mouse, when he found himself surrounded by a group of armed bullies, and Sheriff Jones was reading his writ of arrest on charge of treason. The Scotchman set his teeth firmly as he listened and found himself a prisoner.

"Jones," he said, when the reading was done, "by what right do you call me a traitor and a prisoner? Where is the Wakarusa treaty?"

"It's ended, by ——." Jones' profanity was too vile to set down. "It never was no treaty we meant to keep. Soon as that coward of a Governor Shannon got sober, he repudiated it. These writs are given to me by the Governor himself. Every man who helped to get Branson away from me, and every tyrannical dog that's ever befriended Lawrence is going to rot in jail till they swing from the tree nearest to the jail. Come on."

But Lamond stood firm. His yellow hair, damp from his honest toil, and his sunny beard gleamed in the western light. Something about him may have looked to the group of ruffians as James Fitz-James appeared to the outlaw Scots on Ben Ledi's mountainside, but Jones was no Roderick Dhu.

"You dare not arrest me, Jones," the Scotchman said, firmly. "You have no right."

"I have all the right and the law. The Governor of Kansas and the military power at Washington, and President Pierce are all back of me." And again Sheriff Jones swore blasphemously. "Your day is done. Your hours are as good as told off now. We'll teach you to flaunt your Free-State notions in this country, you vile Abolition cur. Go on, men, tie him fast, and drag him along."

"I'll go with you peaceably, not because you have any right under heaven to take me, though," Lamond answered back, defiantly.

"Tie him and drag him along," again the order was given. But Jones had not reckoned with the blood of a Scotchman. Lamond squared his shoulders and clinched his brawny fists. Through his yellow beard his white teeth gleamed dangerously.

"I'll go with you peaceably, I told you, because you've got the vile pretense called law and the power on your side. But I'll not be bound and I'll not be dragged. If you want to try that game, come on and try it now."

Nobody wanted to try it just then, and Bill, the coward of the pack, slipping from his own lean horse, said:

"Here, Sheriff, take my horse, I'll take this one."

The man cut Pluto's traces at the word, and David Lamond saw his big black horse stolen before his eyes, and he was powerless to protest.

All this had happened out of sight of the stone homestead, and Mrs. Lamond and Beth were unconscious of the impending trouble.

The next man seized as a traitor was Hiram Darrow, and, like Lamond, he had no recourse but to submit, and no opportunity to see his family before he was hurried

away. Along with other leading men of the Territory, seized by other posses, the two were carried off to the Lecompton jail, to await the force of legalized brutality and outlaw vengeance.

As Jones and his band reached the bluff overlooking the Vinland Valley, they met Craig Penwin in the Trail. The proud young aristocrat would have passed them quietly by had he not caught sight of Lamond's Pluto, ridden by a ruffian whose face he remembered, and in the next instant he saw Lamond himself a prisoner beside Hiram Darrow. The horsemen paused on the brow of the bluff while Sheriff Jones and Major Buford together took the census of the settlement proscribed for destruction. In this delay Craig walked straight to the man astride the black horse.

"Get off that horse," he commanded.

"What's the row here?" Roxbury growled at this impertinence.

But Buford, turning quickly and seeing Boniface Penwin's son, said:

"All right, Roxbury. Let that boy alone."

Roxbury swore, for that was the language of his clan, but Craig, with cool indifference, led Pluto toward his master.

"Is there any message I can take for you when I take this horse home?" he asked, with that courtesy that from a younger man always appeals to his elders.

David Lamond looked with gratitude at the young Southerner.

"Thank you, Craig," he said, warmly. "Tell mother not to worry nor be afraid. I'll soon be back, I'm sure. And tell Beth——" He hesitated. Maybe a weight of remorse that was heavier than prisoner's bonds held him back a little before he spoke. "Tell Beth, that what-

ever happens to me until I see her again, I shall hold her to her promise. She will understand."

And Craig thought he also understood. The crowd started down the winding hidden way of the Trail toward the open slope and the ravine, while Craig, with the big shining black horse hastened toward the home of Elizabeth Lamond.

Although Hiram Darrow had stood beside his neighbor, Craig had offered no word of comfort or assistance to him. When Lamond noted this afterward, Darrow said, serenely:

"It is no matter. Craig Penwin will need my family more than they will ever need him."

And the words, forgotten by the speaker, rankled in the honest Scotchman's mind for many hours.

At the shadiest bend of the Trail, Boniface Penwin stood beside the vine-draped shelving rock; the same romantic, picturesque nook where on a golden Sabbath day the heavens had opened for Beth and Elliot and showed them love's young dream made real. The colonel joined the men for whom he had been waiting in hiding here.

"Such a father and such a son," Lamond thought, as he looked at the colonel. Then, as he looked at Darrow, he wondered why Craig could not have been the Quaker's boy and Elliot born a Penwin. It would have suited the Scotchman better so.

Patty Wren had a wonderful story to tell when her husband came trotting home from his fishing.

"What all did you ketch, Coke?" she asked, when she had finished her tale.

"Ketched a cold, an' a touch of the rheumatiz, an' something here, I'll show you later—ef you're a good girl, an' say 'please,'" he added, grinning. "But I did n't

git ketched myself none, so 's you could sense it about me. I was down at the Hole in the Rock."

"Is they real fishin' there, or did I jest happen to hit the truth, accidental providential?" Patty asked.

"Yes, some kinds," Wren replied. "I was there, anyhow, right by the Trail crossin', fishin', when the look of the water on the fur side ketched my eye. I took my line over an' set it there, an' with a stick I tried the depth where the water by the edge looked different. A little shelf sticks out about a foot down, an' a foot or more wide, an' then the whole thing drops down thirty feet to the bottom. It was on this shelf I was feeling careful with my stick. It had a limb broke off, making a kind of a hook on the end, an' I felt something loose. I raked it out. It 's in the bucket here, where there ain't no fish. I 'll tell you why."

Patty restrained her curiosity to peep in the bucket, and Coke continued:

"I was just goin' to punch around again when I hear horses, an' swearin'. You know what that means, Patty Wren. Down the Trail Sheriff Jones comes dashin' with a posse of men an' two prisoners, Hiram Darrow, an' David Lamond. I slid into the brush back of the pool quick, as I heard 'em cussin' my name proper. One of them they call Roxbury says, 'Let 's stop right now an' git this — eighteen er twenty dashes — Yankee, an' we 'll have all of that Branson crowd from this corner.' I know'd then they 'd broke the Wakarusa treaty an' was a brandin' us for treason."

"But they did n't git you, did they, Cokey?" Patty asked, anxiously.

"Do I look like I was on my way to Lecompton to jail with a posse of ruffians, or am I settin' on the banks

of the Wakaroosy eatin' cocoanuts?" Coke asked, with a grin.

"You're playing the fool much as the Good Bein' 'll let you, wherever you are." Patty stroked Coke's hand gently and her tone was more affectionate than her words. "Thank the Lord, they did n't git you. How 'd you keep out of their claws?"

"I laid low and turned green, just the color of the bushes, an' Boniface Penwin, ridin' next the Hole, seemed to ketch sight of my cork bobbin' in the water, and he just hurries the whole pack on. That's how. Now, let's look at the bucket."

And the two examined Coke's catch intently. The next morning Coke and catch were hurrying toward Lawrence with all speed. But Winthrop Merriford, under indictment for treason against the laws of the Territory, was in a crowded jail in Lecompton with a strange mixture of lawless wretches and high-minded gentlemen. And the reign of terror was almost to its flood tide of misrule and misery.

Down in the Vinland Valley, two homes, left fatherless for the time, were full of anxiety. Craig Penwin took Lamond's black horse to its stable and Lamond's messages to the wife and daughter. He gave them cordially and carefully, but he let Beth know how far he understood her father's wishes in his message to her. Then, with the assurance that he would serve them gladly, if they would permit him, he left them.

Strangely enough, it was through Boniface Penwin's household that the Darrow family first knew of the father's forcible seizure. Lucy and Tarley, almost as defiant in these days as Craig himself, had decided to visit Joe. Mark was such a man now that Lucy had lost the freedom she once felt with him. The two had

come out on the bluff in time to see Jones and his prisoners on the slope between the wood and the ravine, and they had recognized their neighbors with their father and Buford, whom they had come to know well. Indignant and grieving, they hurried to meet Isabel Darrow, and tell her what they had seen.

The April day was ending in the Vinland Valley, and all the gentle voices of the evening were calling in their soft, insistent tones to note the dewy sweetness of the time. The peace of night was falling over all the land where troubled hearts, and lonely hearthstones, and anxious fear prevailed in bitter contrast to the wooing spirit of the quiet beauty of the April twilight.

Beth Lamond came to the little stone porch and looked wistfully out at the shadowy prairies and the silver scimitar of the new moon gleaming in the western heavens. Loneliness, sorrow, and dread filled her young soul as she saw the beauty about her that she could not enjoy. And above everything else was there a longing in her heart for the presence of her lover.

"And I have promised papa that I will have nothing to do with Elliot until papa has had time to talk with me. And now he is carried away. Dear papa! Dear papa!" Beth wiped the tears from her eyes and tried to be brave, but her heart was heavy.

The tender young leaves on the vines about the porch pillars recalled the night in October when they had been waiting the autumn frosts, and Elliot had kissed her here in the moonlight. Why should she want so much to see him to-night, when he must not come to her? She looked down the trail winding away to the main highway hidden by the wood. In the gloaming Elliot Dar-

row came striding along the path with step as firm and free as if no weight could burden him.

"I could n't stay away," he said, as Beth sprang forward to meet him.

He took both of her hands in his and held them close, while he looked down into her eager, yet sorrowful, face.

"I have little real fear for our fathers, Beth. They will have to put up with many things; but, Beth,"—and Elliot gently lifted her face between his hands—"dear girl, why have we been taught all these years to say the Twenty-third Psalm, if in the days of strife and fear, goodness and mercy are not going to follow us? My mother never seemed so wonderful to me as she did to-night at supper, when she read the Bible to us boys. 'Fret not thyself because of evil-doers.' That was the Psalm she read."

How strong and fearless he seemed! How sure of the future, and of himself!

"But Elliot, I must tell you something," Beth said, sadly.

They sat down together on the stone step, and, in spite of the times, the loveliness of the April evening was appealing to both. Elliot drew Beth's hand through his arm and held it there.

"Tell me anything you want to, dearie," he murmured.

Beth needed all her bravery then.

"Elliot, I told papa something."

"Yes, I meant to do it first, but no matter."

"But it does matter." Beth's voice faltered. "Papa asked me last night as we sat out here if you had ever—ever——"

"Yes, Beth, and I had," Elliot helped her, smilingly.

"Had said anything you oughtn't say to me."

"Well, I don't know about that," the young Quaker began. But Beth went on:

"I told him the truth, and he said—" The golden head was bending now, and the gray eyes were luminous with tears. Elliot put his arm about her, and drew her close to him.

"Yes, dearie," he said. "I was a coward and a sham of a man, good enough to look at if nobody else was around, but without the stamina a young man in the West must have——"

"Oh, no, not all of that, Elliot. But I promised him, for he begged me to, not to have anything more to do with you until he had talked with me; promised him solemnly and faithfully."

The young man had dropped her hand and sat with folded arms looking out at the last soft light playing in from the west. In the twilight his face seemed never so strong and handsome as now.

"Craig Penwin got Pluto away from the gang and brought him home, and papa sent me word by Craig that whatever happens, he holds me to my promise until he sees me again; my promise not to see you nor have anything more to do with you," Beth said, in a low tone.

"When does that court convene up at Lecompton to try those traitors?" Elliot asked, in a changed voice.

"Don't blame me, Elliot," Beth said, pleadingly.

"I couldn't do that, dearie," Elliot said, gently, but his arms were still folded tightly. "And I will not make you unhappy by being where you must see me unnecessarily, and so embarrass you."

In that moment Beth would have broken all pledges to her father for the sake of keeping Elliot near her, had he asked her to do it. But he did not ask her.

"Your father is right. He wants to do his own way, and I have no right to object. I give up all claim to you here and now until you and your father understand each other."

There was a clear ring in his voice Beth had never heard before, and the vision of Rosalind came unbidden to her again as it had done twice already. They were standing now facing each other.

"But one thing I promise you here," Elliot said, firmly. "I shall keep as far from you as the limits of Kansas will permit. Your father up at the Lecompton jail need not fear my taking any advantage of his absence. I'll leave you as free as if I had never known you"—he was looking straight at her with a wonderful light in his dark eyes—"until the moment when you need help and protection. I shall be so near then that all the Lamonds of the clan, through all the generations, could not prevent my serving you if you need me."

Elizabeth lifted her beautiful face to his and her eyes were full of pleading.

"I need you now," she murmured. And Elliot folded her in his arms and held her close, and kissed her forehead, and softly caressed the golden hair rippling about it. Then he gently put her aside.

"I'm going now, and I also shall keep my word to you, as you must to your father. But, Beth, my dear, dear girl," he said, softly, "I have a locket still."

"And I have the chain. Good-by."

The young Quaker walked down the Trail into the gathering darkness. The fair Scotch lassie watched him till the shadows enveloped him. And, for two young pioneers at least, the reign of terror in Kansas was checkered through with a steadfast beautiful faith.

Elliot did not loiter on his homeward way, but took

the straight line across the prairie toward the dark point against the eastern sky that he knew was Mark's Dar-rarat. As he passed into the draw, where he had found the Indian blanket on the night of Branson's rescue, he stopped long enough to look again under the little rock shelf where he had thrust it.

"I had forgotten ever to hunt for the rest of that Indian's wardrobe," he thought. "What a busy life we are leading here! I suppose that blanket rotted in the snows last winter."

The clear starlight revealed the little black shadow cast by the stone outcrop, and beside it a low mound of earth showed the outline of an unmarked grave. The spring grasses were growing on it, so it could not have been made since the snows melted. And Elliot wondered sadly what name was lost under that little heap of prairie soil.

The next night, a bullet out of the dark wounded Sheriff Jones seriously, but not dangerously. At once the Lawrence men, whom Jones would have driven out by all violence, denounced and hunted for the man who had fired upon their enemy. So strong as yet was the conservative policy of non-resistance!

But Jones' party claimed now excuse for the maddest frenzy. From every hilltop they blared the news that Kansas was in control of bloody Abolitionist assassins. Their cry reached to the Atlantic seaboard and all the crimes of their own commission, the loot, and burning, and outrage, and murder, they blazoned on banners and charged them all to the men who had endured, and resisted, only to defend their lives and their sacred right to freedom of belief. Again the forces, who came with swords, but never with plowshares, swept into Kansas, and the deluge of fire and slaughter reached the crest of its flood tide and hung there.

CHAPTER XX

"LETTING IN THE JUNGLE"

Lawrence, the city where the plunderer feasted at the hospitable table, and, Judas-like, went out to betray it, will come forth from its early burial clothed with yet more exceeding beauty. Out of its charred and blood-stained ruins, where the flag of rapine floated, will spring the high walls and strong parapets of freedom.

—Sara T. D. Robinson, 1856.

MAY came in its appointed time. In Kansas, the month of wild-roses, and odorous verbenas; the month of deep blue skies, and snowy-white, silken-soft cumulous clouds; the month of balmy air, of golden noontides, and crystal-clear, star-gemmed nights; the month of bird's song and sweet-voiced zephyrs; the month of growing things—the mother-month of all exquisite loveliness.

Amid all this beauty, the Kansas prairies fainted under the hoof-beats of war steeds on the springing sod. The deep stain upon the wayside shamed the dainty hue of the wild-rose. The smell of putrid decay overcame the perfume of the verbena. Against the blue dome by day, the smoke of burning pioneer homes poured up black and ugly, and the crystal skies of evening were lighted by the torches of a plundering band. The song of the birds was drowned by the scream of terror or wail of anguish, and where growing grain should have been storing up food for coming harvests, untilled furrows gave culture only to the idle weeds. With the perspective of half a

century turned on those lays, the story of their peril and power seems only as a tale that is told.

In the "prairie bastile" at Lecompton the leaders of Free State settlement languished through all this glorious Maytime. Some were in log prisons, crowded, filthy, and, by the words and deeds of their cruel jailors, made unspeakably vile. Some were held in guarded tents, damp and cold at night, hot and uncomfortable by day. And everywhere, by day and by night, drunkenness, blasphemy, brutality, threats, jeers, and the flaunting of unjust and a seemingly unbreakable power made strong men sick at heart. For men who had been guilty of no crime save the crime of humanity, men who in all civil law were citizens of that sterling worth that makes a state invincible, such men were held at Lecompton on charge of treason, and were in all ways given the traitor's courtesy; while Lawrence and the larger settlements, robbed now of their leading minds, were left to such mercy as these prairie pirates possessed.

Every day of their imprisonment David Lamond's regard for Hiram Darrow grew. The Quaker was gentle with a modesty that made him appear timid. Yet over and over in the days of waiting for their trial in court, when fighting men were broken in spirit and ready to submit, Darrow was serenely patient. In the presence of danger he was utterly fearless, and he exercised the right to say what he chose, whenever it pleased him to do it. Lamond himself was not cowardly nor despondent, and Darrow's comradeship was a joy to him.

Yet the resentment against the Quaker's son did not lessen in the Scotchman's heart with this growing friendship for the father, because he was a man of such firm convictions that he hated to reverse himself in his own judgments. Also he did not go far enough back to find

out that the real beginning of his resentment was with the discovery that some day the daughter whom he idolized would share her love with someone other than her father. He did not realize that his resentment would have been the same at first toward any other young man. And, having once made up his mind, the same tenacity that held him loyal to the flag of his country held him set in the declaration that Elliot Darrow was a weak, good-looking, smooth-spoken, cowardly young man, lacking that glorious courage that made a man a hero to a follower of Wallace and Bruce. With this close companionship with Hiram Darrow, David Lamond saw daily how the same gentle but unbreakable spirit of the father was reflected in the son, and he resented it. That was all. And without his blessing Beth should never marry anybody. That settled things.

And Elliot? He kept his word to Beth, that she might keep hers to her father more easily. He knew the strength of her mind too well to believe she would be untrue to her promise to her father.

"It is an accidental thing that she must wait and I must wait," he said to himself. "But it will come out right after a while."

He schooled himself to patience by hard work, and even then he found his battle a fierce one. For love and youth are tyrannical in their demands.

Craig Penwin came and went with a freedom that was galling to the young Quaker exiled a field away, and Craig would have been jubilant had he known how much his coming did to lighten the hours for Beth.

With Coke Wren, Elliot and Mark worked on the Lamond claim, as well as on their own, helping to keep the spring crops growing for their neighbor; and they had little time for resting.

The trails were unsafe for travel now, and only as Craig accompanied her did Beth venture far from home.

As Elliot followed the plow down the long furrow one afternoon, he saw the two starting away together down the path to the highway.

"If they walk at that pace, I'll meet them at the end of the corn row," he thought. "I can plow her father's corn — why can't I speak to her, at least? I'll stop in the shade of that cottonwood tree and wait for them."

He was hungering for one look from her gray eyes, and he told himself he was not jealous of Craig. But the two quickened their pace and were out of range before he had come to the end of the field. Elliot stopped his plow by the cottonwood long enough to look after them. His eyes were keener than most eyes are, and he saw, even so far away, all the little tricks by which Craig was making the hour pleasant for his companion, conscious the while that a sturdy plowman was watching him. How could he know that Beth's heart was as hungry as his own for one look from those wonderful dark eyes, and one smile, so cordial and happy always?

When the two came back, late in the afternoon, there was a buggy under the cottonwood tree, and Rosalind St. Felix, in a pretty pink gingham dress and white chip hat, was chatting with the tall young plowman. Her dark face was radiant, and Elliot was smiling down upon her as they talked together. Dr. St. Felix came from the stone cabin as Craig and Beth approached, and Elliot, with a nod to the two, and without seeming to see Beth directly, smiled a goodby upon the dainty little lady in the buggy and strode along the up-furrow after Pluto.

"I came to see Mr. Darrow about some analyses I'm writing out for him, and he wasn't at home, so I came

on here," Rosalind explained. "Isn't it grand of him to do your father's work?"

"Did he say he thought it was grand?" Craig asked. He had seen the longing look on Beth's face, and he was bitterly jealous and off his guard.

"Elliot? Oh, no. When I said as much to him, he laughed, and said he owned this field — that it was Mr. Wren who was doing Mr. Lamond's work. But I knew better. I can tell when he is telling me a story."

"I wish I could," Beth thought.

And Craig, still angry at the world, exclaimed, but smoothly now, "Why shouldn't he plow? It's his line of work. He won't let the niggers do it. It's their work or his." And Craig looked so like a gentleman one could scarcely resent his sentiments.

But Beth, looking up-field, heard a sweet voice singing soft and clear, like the low notes of a bird's song:

> I also dreamt, which pleased me most,
> That you loved me still the same.

And Craig could not have told what she thought.

That night the proscription in the Vinland Valley was executed, and when the sun rose on the next morning every Free State man's house was in ashes, save the log house on the hill, among the evergreens, and the cabin that sheltered Elizabeth Lamond.

The blow fell hardest upon the Wrens.

"'Cause we stand most anything," Patty explained afterward.

Early in the evening, a writ of treason was executed on the Yankee, and the ninety-pound little man was rushed off as a dangerous enemy to the State.

"Compliment to Cokey," Patty declared. "Treatin' a

little sparrer-hawk like he was big as a anacondor of South America, 'the largest bird that flies,' the joggerfy used to say. 'Measurin' sometimes four feet from tip to tip.' Coke don't measure but five feet three from beak to feet, an' he's got no more width 'n a sword-fish."

Patty proved her right to live in the West that night, if proof were needed. Sorrowful and anxious, but hoping still, she had cuddled down at a late hour, alone in her cabin. She had just fallen asleep when she was wakened with a start. A voice seemed to whisper, "Wake up, quick! Wake up, quick!" She sat up and stared about. Something slipped out of the back door like a dog and was gone. Voices and horses' feet she could hear coming nearer, and presently, amid much swearing and drunken laughter, the words:

"Burn the cabin! Drive out the woman and shoot her!"

"That's me!" Patty could think quickly. "I ain't goin' to be shot at, an' I ain't goin' to be driv. Where's that thorny locus' tree? I'll take a piller this time.

She was groping in the dark for the little box of precious keepsakes they kept ready for such an emergency as this. Then with her heavy woolen shawl she grasped a fat feather pillow and out of the back door she flew. As the ruffians with much noise were bursting in the front door the little Yankee was scudding up the ravine to where a thick little locust grew half-way down its side.

"You dear little nest," Patty said, deftly keeping the shawl as a shield from its unwelcoming thorns. "I brought up a piller to set on this time. It's my annual roostin' spree here. Now, you wicked old heathen, burn away! There'll be trees growin' here to make beautiful homes when you yourselves are only ashes alongside your

old firebrands. You may burn up their houses, but you can't burn up the spirit of Kansas. You may set your fires to destroy Freedom an' Liberty, but the blood an' tears of martyrs puts out your fires until the time comes when they ain't no more hands dares light a burnin' brand against 'em, and in peace and beauty they stand eternal. An' in that Kansas I'm goin' to be livin', if I have to roost for a dozen years. It's lots comfortabler this year. I've got a piller to set on. Next year I'll bring my knittin'!

"Hard to make that chimney go, hain't it? Never did draw very well. I see now how it's built wrong. I'll tell Cokey not to put such a deep throat in the next one. Live an' learn. Them rascals is doin' me a real favor."

So Patty philosophized as she watched her burning cabin, safe herself from flame or sight of her enemies.

That which wakened Patty so easily — for she slept like a bird, with one eye open — had a harder time at the Darrow home. The boys, wearied from working all day in the fields, slept like dead men, and Isabel was always a sound sleeper. From door to window, and from window to door, a form crept, rapping softly but insistently, until at length, stopping at the corner of the house, it suddenly climbed swiftly to the roof by the log angle, and down through the Darrarat it dived inside. A minute later, Elliot, shaken wide awake, saw White Turkey bending over him. He had no time to shake off the deadness that sound sleep hangs on mind and muscle, for the Indian pulled him out of bed with vim.

"Get up quick. Buford's men come; burn cabin; get up!"

Elliot grasped the situation, and the household roused itself for action. When the crowd of midnight raiders

reached the Darrow home, Boniface Penwin, who hitherto had shown them the way, left them.

"Whatever you do, get the biggest one there. Don't let him escape." This had been his urgent command.

The men were very drunk now and had no mind to let anybody escape as they came in a mad gallop to the evergreen-sheltered cabin. White Turkey, who was armed, wanted to open fire at once, but Elliot held him back.

"No, White Turkey," he said; "we'll defend, not attack."

And the Indian, muttering something about "Heap big fool," obeyed.

As the crowd reached the house and leaped from their horses, the door suddenly opened, with a cry of "Halt!" And Elliot stood outlined in the gloom. At the same moment a gun-barrel in the hands of White Turkey gleamed in the dim light.

The men fell back a pace, and one of them shouted drunkenly, "We've come to burn your house and kill the biggest one, and we're goin' to do it. Go ahead."

There were six of them, the same half-dozen that Elliot had met at the Nethercote home. Mark and the Indian were out now. Three against six! But the three were sober and the six were drunk. Before they had time to go ahead, the three were upon them. Bill, the coward, seized his horse and escaped. But the suddenness of this resistance, where they had expected only pleadings for mercy, so surprised them that a hand-to-hand battle was on before they knew it.

A stroke from Elliot's fist sent his first assailant staggering out of the line, and three contended with three, blow against blow. The men were all-round fighters, although they were handier with their firearms than

with their fists, and they had the stimulus that whisky puts into the nerves for the time. But they lacked the cleverness of clear brains, and they were not fighting for a home and a mother's life and honor.

The Darrow boys, good Quakers that they were, struck out with all the skill and agility of youth, and their blows had the steel spring behind them that gave them terrific force. They fought, too, as young men, more daring and fearless than older men would have done. They did not lose self-control for a minute, and back of everything else was their sense of their right to fight and their willingness to struggle to the last for their beautiful Quaker mother, their little brother, and the home that was theirs to defend. So they wrestled with the strength of heroes, never doubting that they could win.

The Indian fought like an Indian, with his gun for a club, and White Turkey was a terror in his anger. He beat off the man against him and managed to club back both his own assailants and the one whom Elliot had thrown out at first. But two were all he could care for, and the boys had to decide their own conflicts.

As the sixth man rushed upon the others struggling together in the dark, a strong hand caught his arm, — a woman's hand, — but he never knew that. It clung with a grip of steel, and in his effort to shake himself free he plunged headlong into the nagging, unfriendly evergreen branches and fell. Before he was free the struggle was over, and the men who came to burn and to kill the "biggest one" were on their horses again, plunging into the night.

"Battle of Darrow Hill! Enemy repulsed with great slaughter!" Mark began. But Elliot was not jubilant.

"Come, White Turkey; we must run across the prairie to Lamond's," he said.

"Me not." The Indian shook his head.

"Why not?" Elliot asked.

"No need. Penwin say every house, — one, two, three, four, five, — burn. Stone house, six, not burn."

"Lamond's is the only stone house. He spares that. I know why," Elliot said. "But Penwin is n't with that crew, and they are drunk. They failed here. They might go there. Come on."

So, against the Indian's judgment, they hurried with all speed toward the Lamond home. And there was need for speed. The coward of the pack rode away to Buford's camp. The man whom White Turkey had clubbed back was sobered and knew when he had had enough. But the other four were furious over the repulse on the hill.

"We was to do five; come on! There 's the stone house left," the leader argued.

"We was to let that alone," one of the men objected. He had already almost scratched out both his eyes in the snarly cedars, and he was in no hurry to scratch them in again.

"We was to git five; we 've only got four," the first insisted.

The result of much parleying was that three rode on to Lamond's and three straggled off toward their camp.

In the dead hour of the night, Mrs. Lamond and her daughter were wakened by shouts and blows upon the door. A glare filled the place, and in its blinding light a black horse ran by as only a frightened horse can run.

"They are burning the stable, mother. There goes Pluto," Beth said.

A volley of bullets struck the stone walls, and the command, "Come out! Come out!" was repeated.

"There are three of them; I can see their shadows,"

and Beth and her mother crouched into the farthest corner of the room.

Another burst of blasphemy, and then came a shout louder than their vile words, and the voice Beth knew.

"Oh, mother, mother. There is Elliot!" Beth cried. "He said he would come when we needed him."

Outside a second battle was on. This time it was Elliot who had two assailants, while one of the men whom the Indian had held back before was ready for him now. Again the Quaker fought, this time for the girl he loved. His muscles played like magic, for now the tiger in him was aroused and he fought to kill, and knew he could do it. This battle was a fierce one, waged in the glare of the burning buildings, silently, swiftly, revengefully. The men were beyond the window by the stone porch now, and Beth with terrified eyes saw Elliot in all the strife. Even as her heart stood still with fear, she thought of her father, who had called the boy a pretty cowardly weakling, looking out for his own safety first.

The strife was over soon. A terrific blow sent one big fellow limp and groping toward his horse. A second like it, and the other one was begging for mercy. In another minute the midnight raiders were glad of the chance to get away.

Elliot would have stopped outside the door, but Mrs. Lamond pulled him in to where in the dim light she and her daughter stood trembling in the gloom.

"I knew you needed me, or I would not have come, and I promised you I 'd do that," Elliot said.

In the dark Beth gently guided his hand to where his fingers just touched the little chain at her throat — a touch, and she dropped the hand quickly. He stooped and whispered low:

"Some battles are harder to fight than these midnight skirmishes with Buford's men. I'm a bigger coward than I thought I was."

As the two men crossed the shallow draw on their way to the Darrow cabin, Elliot remembered the blanket and the grave.

"Say, White Turkey, who do you suppose is buried there?" he asked.

"Me not suppose, me know," White Turkey replied.

"You do? How did you find out?" Elliot asked, in surprise.

"Me put him there," the Indian said sternly. "Me help do it. Shut up."

And Elliot said no more, for he knew when White Turkey had reached his limit of speech.

There was but one purpose back of all the events of these May days and nights: to strangle the spirit of Freedom in the West, that an empire founded on human slavery should grow strong and rich and cruelly tyrannous upon the fertile Kansas prairies. Hence all this pillage, and burning, and midnight assassination, and treason charges that crammed the jails of Leavenworth and Lecompton, and the widespread, untrue alarms to the effect that the Free State folk were in rebellion, demanding large bodies of soldiers to subdue. And constantly as from the beginning came the cry that *Lawrence must be destroyed!*

By the middle of May the countryside was terrorized. Homes were in ashes. Crops were untilled, blood-stained tragedies had broken families, and most of the leading men were imprisoned. Then the blow fell.

Along the old Santa Fé Trail, and up the Wakarusa Valley, and across the broken country north of the Kaw River, came bands of brutal-looking horsemen, scurrying

from the border at command of sheriff and governor, and because they lusted for these things themselves. Large of frame these men were, with coarse, unshaven faces, and savage looks, and blasphemous words. They wore red flannel shirts and big boots outside their trousers. They carried rifles, and revolvers, and bowie-knives, and cutlasses; and to them human life was as cheap as the wastes of sand along the low borders of the muddy Missouri River.

Lawrence must be destroyed!

To these men and kindred souls under Buford and Roxbury, the work was entrusted.

Why must a city be destroyed against which no sin could be charged in all the catalog of civil and military sins? In the historical record the declaration is fixed for all generations to read. Its command was that the arms of the Lawrence citizens must be given up, and that complete destruction must fall upon the Eldridge House, as a rallying place for Free State citizens, and owned by Free State proprietors; together with Free State printing presses, because they spoke for Freedom. And in the same historical record — for history is pitilessly cold to the shame the after years would hide — in the same record is the reason Governor Shannon gave for consenting to what he could have prevented.

He said, "Because the South Carolinians will not be satisfied."

And to satisfy these South Carolinians he held the coats for the stoning of the martyr town.

The morning dawned brilliantly clear and beautiful. Down in the Vinland Valley the May sunshine poured out its radiance equally on green prairie grasses and dark leafy woodland, and on scattered household belongings, and smoldering heaps of ashes that last evening

were sheltering homesteads. Up on Mount Oread, above Lawrence, hordes of men were marshalled. They carried government arms and authority, with or without opposition, to destroy the doomed town. Their portraits will never adorn a hall of fame, and their acts that day leave a trail of black slime oozing after their names in perpetual disgrace down all the years that follow. But on this day they had "their little hour of strut and rave," and there was much hurrying of steeds to and fro; much priming of muskets and clanking of sabres; and threats, and maledictions; much instruction to show no quarter to resistance; much talk of gallantry to the ladies, unless they should have arms. In that event, to trample them down like snakes.

The sweet breezes of the May morning played about the brow of Mount Oread. The songbirds sang never more joyously, and the perfume of May blossoms filled the air; while far away to the horizon's bound on every side the landscape unrolled in a grandeur no artist will ever copy. From the lips of the mongrel company came blasphemy and ribald songs; and, black with smoke of powder, the cannon frowned like a living part of the thing that day to be wrought out. Governor Robinson's home, a sacred possession in law, was seized for a headquarters for the leaders. And the hours sped along.

Down in Lawrence, under the shadow of all this bravery, quiet reigned. The men who would have marshalled forces for defence were hemmed in at Lecompton. Men who would have followed leaders were in hiding for their lives or, in anger and disgust, had left the town, or, having no other recourse, were attending to their own affairs. Firearms, their own property, were hidden safely away. The cannon brought in during the Wakarusa War was buried underground. No intention

of resistance existed, for everybody knew that resistance was hopeless. Forty-eight hours before, murder most foul had fallen upon two young men almost within sight of town. No charge of crime, no moment's warning, martyred in the bloom of young manhood as the Christ crucified upon the cross — because they believed in human liberty. Nobody in Lawrence could forecast how many more victims the day would ask of them, since no man's life was safe.

And yet, amid all these things, there was no fear in the little town, because the men who came to Kansas in those days for Freedom's sake left fear behind them.

"All quiet in Lawrence," the runners reported to the five hundred men on Mount Oread, who planted a cannon on the brow of the height overlooking the town.

A few arrests were made by the United States Marshal, and then to Sheriff Jones it was given to work his will. And it was a great day for Jones. Lawrence had resisted and outgeneraled him for a twelvemonth. Now it lay at his mercy.

Early that morning, Elliot Darrow, leaving White Turkey with Mark at home, had ridden up to Lawrence for supplies for the burned-out neighborhood. Much anxiety was felt in the Vinland Valley for him, for no highway was safe now. But Elliot had no fear for himself, and, as he rode along, his fingers seemed to feel the momentary touch on Beth's throat and the little gold chain upon it.

The Eldridge House was just completed and opened that day for its first dinner in celebration of the event. Boniface Penwin was a guest, and as he sat in the handsome dining-room he was amazed to see Elliot Darrow come smiling in between Rosalind St. Felix and her father.

"Does the dog have a charmed life?" he asked himself. "Buford's men promised not to let him escape. Yet here he is, serene as a summer morning. It shall not always be so, if I must do the deed in open daylight." And the Colonel's cold gray eyes were set like a serpent's upon the young man.

"Darrow," St. Felix said, "you have come up in a poor time. There will be trouble here before night."

"I'll be away from here before night," Elliot answered. "I'm just after a horse's load of things for the neighbors."

"And you never go armed?" Rosalind said, with pretty anxiety, looking up at him.

He was not thinking of himself, else he would have seen, maybe, how frequently she sought his glance, yet with a modest air that showed the lady she would always be.

"Yes, Rosalind," he smiled down on her. "I have my big coarse fists, somewhat battered since last night."

"Oh, tell me about it," Rosalind said eagerly, and Elliot told her of the first encounter, when Dr. St. Felix interrupted.

"Never mind now, Rossie," he said. "You will find every road barred now, Darrow. You can't get out of Lawrence."

"I tell you, Doctor, I've got to get home this afternoon. I ought not to have staid for dinner." The shade on Rosalind's face kept him from saying more.

The meal was hardly finished when Sheriff Jones, leading two dozen armed men, appeared in the street. With swagger and sneer and much show of power, he demanded the rifles and cannon of the Lawrence men.

There was no alternative but to give up the cannon, but the rifles were refused. Elliot watched the whole proceeding as he stood in the window of Dr. St. Felix's

office; while down on the street Boniface Penwin watched him.

"The coward comes sneaking into town and puts himself under the protection of St. Felix, whom everybody knows believes in slavery. I wonder how the fighting Scotchman will like that," Penwin commented mentally. "I'll go to Lecompton to-night and I'll let Lamond know all about this. It won't hurt Craig with that stubborn Scot. Craig can let Elizabeth know of this, too, and of Rosalind."

With shame and anger, the Lawrence people saw their cannon taken away from them. Was there no justice anywhere? they asked themselves, in their humiliation.

Meanwhile half a thousand armed men moved in a solid column down upon the town and halted before the hotel. Their banners were flying overhead, but the flag of a free nation was spared that shame and dishonor. In its stead was a blood-red banner with one white star upon it, and the words "Southern Rights" about the star.

Then began the sack of the newspaper offices, the breaking up of the presses, and the scattering of books and papers in the street, while the type was thrown into the Kaw River. The cannon that had brought security to the beleaguered town in the Wakarusa War was now planted fairly against their new hotel. Then Jones, with the defenceless people at his mercy, gave out his orders. The hotel must come down. New, strongly built, just furnished at a cost of thousands of dollars — yet it must be destroyed.

"All the roads are guarded now. You'll be shot like a dog, Darrow." Dr. St. Felix said to Elliot. "Help us

now to get our belongings out of here before they begin their work."

Boniface Penwin watched beside the cannon while Elliot helped St. Felix to carry out their possessions, and not only theirs, but others; and so long as he could be of service the young man worked; while across the street his enemy gloated over the story he could frame against his son's strong rival.

With all this destruction, the invaders began the lawless looting of property and wanton smashing of furniture and other belongings. Then cannon from four directions were trained on the hotel, and ball after ball crashed against it. But it stood secure. Powder-kegs were placed in its cellar in an attempt to blow it apart. But the building had a Free State foundation and firmness. Then the insidious little firebrands came into play; the flames burst from every window, and the substantial hostelry, because "the South Carolinians would not be satisfied" otherwise, was left a mass of jagged falling walls and smoking embers.

With the wild cannonading in the hands of drunken destroyers, the women and children began to flee from the town for safety.

"Come, go with us, Mr. Darrow," Mrs. Merriford pleaded.

"Are you afraid to go?" Elliot asked.

"No, not for ourselves, but for you," Mrs. Merriford said.

"I would be no safer there than here. It is men they want. I'll stay here with them," Elliot replied determinedly.

"In truth, his peace-loving soul had never before known the depths of anger and fury the last twenty-four hours had brought to it. And Elliot, with set teeth

and white, grim face, was dedicating himself to his country with a courage David Lamond would have joyed to know.

Amid all the noises of cannon and roar of flame and shouts of maudlin glee, Sheriff Jones showed supremely tyrannous.

"The happiest day of my life," he declared. "I determined to make the fanatics bow before me in the dust."

Another round of shot poured from the cannon, carrying terror and destruction as it hurled its way through the air.

"I've done it, by God! I've done it," the Sheriff cried, with a scornful sneer, and, turning, he dismissed his forces, to rob and demolish at will.

Then followed the wild invasion of sacred places. Homes were ransacked and set on fire, valuables were carried off, and precious keepsakes wantonly destroyed. Mad with whisky and the lust for loot, these creatures ran like wild beasts from place to place, loading themselves with stolen property or trampling it to ruin. Knowing no law, they put upon the sacked town every mark of degradation and demolition, until at last, leaving the work of their hands to the bereft citizens, homeless women, and hungry children, glutted with vengeance and rioting in savage glee, they took themselves away. And the dove of peace perched again on the broken walls and ruined doorways of Lawrence.

Elliot Darrow looked back as he left the town in the evening gloaming. Up on Mount Oread the flames were bursting from the home of Dr. Robinson. The house was a handsome one, finished in black walnut, with polished mantels and dainty furnishings, and this, with all its precious belongings, was blazing against the western sky with a lurid glare. The sight of it all, with

the sacked and desolate town below it, set the young man's blood on fire.

"The crowning act of a glorious event!—and 'a man's house is his castle,'" Elliot said bitterly. "If the day ever comes when I can hold the Stars and Stripes above that hateful rag that floated out in disgrace over Lawrence to-day, Quaker that I am, I'll do it, if I have to carry a gun in one hand and a sword in the other, and wade through human blood even to my own last minute. The flag of my country is worth more than my life, for it means liberty to all men. And to its honor and its power I give myself here."

He looked long at the Wakarusa Valley, wrapped in the purple haze of twilight, and at the angry flames that crowned Mount Oread. Then, lifting his face to the stars of evening, he held up his right hand in sacred promise to God for the land he loved and the flag to which he pledged his loyalty. But of this David Lamond knew nothing.

PART THREE

THE VICTORY

Many loved Truth and lavished life's best oil
  Amidst the dust of books to find her,
Content at last for guerdon of their toil,
  With the cast mantle she hath left behind her.
    Many in sad faith sought for her,
    Many with crossed hands sighed for her,
    But these, our brothers, fought for her,
    At life's dear peril wrought for her,
    So loved her that they died for her.
    * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *
    Their higher instincts knew
Those love her best who to themselves are true
And what they dare to dream of dare to do.

— James Russell Lowell.

CHAPTER XXI

A MORAL AGENCY

The Sharp's rifle was a truly moral agency.
— Henry Ward Beecher.

NOT only upon Lawrence, but upon all the Kansas Territory, did ruin, and riot, and menacing peril hang with blighting power on the morning of the twenty-second of May, 1856. For if the destruction of Lawrence was necessary to satisfy the South Carolinians, much more dreadful and widespread was the destruction needed to satisfy the Georgians, the Missourians, and others who in those days defamed the fair names of States they claimed to represent. In a land where the mere question asked of a stranger, "Are you an Abolitionist?" if answered in the affirmative, might send the assassin's bullet crashing through a man's brain, satisfaction could hardly be complete with the ruin of one town. Before and after the vengeance of Sheriff Jones and the will of the South Carolinians was wreaked on the doomed place, the whole region to the east and south was under dire proscription. It is recorded in the book of history that the raiders, turned loose with the downfall of the Eldridge House, found the footing of Lawrence only the whetting of their appetites for the larger feed that dying men and defenceless women alone could fully glut. Such is the maw of evil, fed with the daily sight of slavery, whether it be black or white. And the story of the woes of Kansas is repeated in the peonage of Mexico, the

tyranny of Russia in Siberia, and the white-slave traffic and child-labor curse of the United States.

When Elliot Darrow, with face uplifted, made oath before high heaven to defend the flag of his country, his soul was uplifted likewise with the inspiration of that courage that can meet a danger it dares not ignore. Elliot knew that every foot of the Trail before him was beset with peril. But he was young and strong and daring and unafraid. Once more he turned to look at the beautiful twilight upon the Wakarusa and the dark pall of smoke hanging over Lawrence and the red flames leaping angrily on the top of Mount Oread; and, beyond all these, to the grandeur of the sunset sky, unspeakably gorgeous in the twilight illumination. Then he set his face to the south and rode away into the deepening gloom of night.

He rode easily at first, letting his horse get its muscles into play and mettle into temper. Then he quickened his speed and the miles were paid out steadily and swiftly. His eyes grew accustomed to the darkness and he saw his way distinctly enough. As he reached the edge of the ravine beyond the Hole in the Rock, however, the shadows were very black below him. A shiver shook his frame, and he held the white horse back for an instant. A sense of impending danger possessed him. The mind acts with amazing swiftness, sometimes. In that instant Elliot thought of many things, but mostly he remembered to have recalled his mother's face. He repeated in memory every item of the errand she had given him that morning, and, curiously enough, he recalled over and over her charge to get turpentine and camphor. The words swung round through his brain on some pivot. He remembered Beth as she looked on the afternoon down in the cool shadows of the old Trail.

He looked at his white horse and wished somehow it was a black one just for the length of that ravine. And then he remembered what John Brown had said of a white horse meaning peace. Somehow, he believed that so long as he was on this white horse peace would abide with him and he would be safe. If it should fail him, peril was sure. All these and other things flashed across his mind with marvelous quickness in one brief moment of pause on the brink of the black ravine.

The next moment he had given his rein a turn, and the blackness had swallowed horse and rider as they plunged down the steep slope and into the stream above the Hole in the Rock. As he reached the hither side, a wall seemed to stand before him, and he knew he had been struck a terrific blow. He uttered no sound himself, but he was conscious of hearing the report of a gun and of his horse staggering about and then sinking under him. A sense of the loss of peace with the loss of the white horse possessed him, and he understood the meaning of the words he heard beyond him:

"Make sure of him now, or you're dead men."

The tone was a familiar one, reminding Elliot of the winter evening at this very spot, when he had heard a voice strangely like this one declare threateningly:

"I shall say something here this evening that will be said only once."

Summoning all his conscious power, his keen eyes searched the darkness, and he recognized the two men with whom he had fought two nights before, and a third man, the speaker, and he called him now clearly by his name.

"Boniface Penwin, you murderer!"

Then all was black, inside and out, for Elliot Darrow, and he knew no more.

The news of the Lawrence raid reached Lecompton early the next day and the gloom of it fell heavily upon the prison camp, as exaggerated reports of the cowardice of the Lawrence men were rehearsed in the prisoners' hearing, and the bitterness of an unjust bondage was made doubly galling.

"What do you think, Darrow? Could we have helped matters if we had been there? You look troubled." Lamond asked the questions as the two men paced up and down the narrow tented walkway allowed to prisoners.

"I do not know what we might have been able to do if we had been there," Darrow replied. "I wish we might have had the chance," he added, with a smile. "And as to what I think, Lamond, I think, bad as the situation must be, these reports are all magnified for our benefit."

"It's a comfort to think of it so; and yet you seem cast down, Darrow," Lamond said, studying the Quaker's face.

"I am burdened with a sense of some disaster. I shall shake it off soon. I hope no harm is befalling our loved ones. We can stand so much more for ourselves than we can for them." And Hiram Darrow walked away.

"He wants to be alone," Lamond thought. "I'll not follow him."

At the end of the row of tents the Scotchman stopped, and, dropping to the ground, sat looking out upon the open country from which he was barred.

Lecompton at that time was one of the plague spots of the Territory, a resort of horse thieves and other desperate characters. A score of houses, most of them used for saloons, made up the village, and all the vices and crimes that belong to drunkenness had full play in

this isolated place. To-day the quiet and peace of the little hamlet overlooking the Kaw River and the rolling uplands belie the turmoil and debauchery and menace to human life that were its leading marks half a century ago.

Lamond had heard the utterance of "such a deal of stinking breath" around the prison camp, he hardly noticed what was said about him. To-day, however, he may have been more alert, for he found himself following the story of the sack of Lawrence, coupled with the tale of the loot and pillage and burning in the Vinland Valley two nights before. The speakers were beyond the tents, out of sight of Lamond, but their voices reached him clearly and his mind suddenly grew intent on the story they were telling.

"Yes, every house down that way is flat ashes now except two," he heard one say. "They failed up at the Quaker's, somehow. I didn't hear just how."

"Whose was the other place?" Another voice questioned, and Lamond listened eagerly for the answer.

"Oh, that Scotchman, Lamond's. They came pretty near it, though. They burned the stable and was about to take the house, and then, it seems, some fellows come on 'em sudden, led by a sweetheart of Lamond's girl. She is beautiful, they say, and this young fellow got wind of the trouble and came rarin' across the country like a madman, and him and another fellow beat 'em out and drove 'em off."

David Lamond bowed his head in gratitude to God for the preservation of his home and loved ones.

"Who was the fellow, did you hear? Maybe they'll get him next," the first speaker said.

"Oh, I think not, 'cause it was young Penwin, old Colonel Penwin's boy. You see, the young fellow don't train with us a minute, just sneers at the whole lot. But

he's the Colonel's boy, and 'sound on the goose.' Stands by his Southern teachin', so nobody dares to interfere with him. I know it was him, because I see him takin' Lamond's big black horse back home to-day. They took it out when the stable burned. The fellows was meanin' to use it themselves, but it got away and young Penwin saved it and the house and the girl and her ma."

"Oh, God be thanked!" David Lamond murmured.

The next minute he was straining his ears again, glad now that Hiram Darrow was out of his sight and of the hearing of the thing he heard.

"Where was that young fellow they call Darrow? Lives down there somewhere, I know. Looked like a pretty cool-headed chap when I run across him in that Wakarusa fuss last winter."

If Lamond had listened closely he could have recognized the voice that replied, even in its disguised accent, for the Southern inflection is not easily overcome; but he was too absorbed in the words to think of the speaker.

"Don't you know about him? Orneriest cuss livin'."

"How's that?"

"Oh, he was home all right night before last, and he lit out to Lawrence yesterday mornin' early. Scared to death and afraid to stay at home. You just ought to 'a' seen how he went over to the other side when Jones and his posse took Lawrence and all the Free State leaders were away. I see him with my own eyes, stickin' so close to a Georgia man nobody'd dare to question him. He's got on the good side of those pro-slavery fellows to save his hide — the lily-livered Abolitionist's son. I hate a coward!"

"So do I," groaned David Lamond. "And that is the fair-faced, smooth-tongued, weak-kneed thing that has

won my Beth by his pretty taking ways. God help me! I'll never permit it! Never!"

And the set face and clinched fists of the stern Scotchman left no room to doubt him.

"This fellow Darrow makes love to St. Felix's daughter, so St. Felix will protect him. He's a slick one. All of us agreed yesterday he'd worked a darned pretty trick carryin' water on both shoulders. But he'll do that, and it was clear to everybody he was joined up with Jones' crew yesterday. Him for the popular side, always." And then the speakers moved out of Lamond's hearing, for they had no more to say.

Up at the far end of the covered walkway, Winthrop Merriford came upon Hiram Darrow, standing with folded arms, looking out toward the Kaw River.

"Hello, Darrow; you seem distressed!" The lawyer's eyes were keen and he read men easily.

Hiram Darrow turned his face to his questioner.

"Merriford, I have no cause for uneasiness more than others, and yet I am possessed with a sense of some evil overhanging my boy."

Winthrop Merriford's face was white with agony. He grasped the Quaker's hand.

"Darrow, I doubt if any other man in Kansas could understand you as well as I can. I've gone over the road. My own boy, Neil, a young man much, very much like your son, is lost." The lawyer choked and turned away.

Darrow held his hand with a firm grasp, and, while he did not speak, there was a sympathy in his presence that was deeply comforting.

"I'll tell you about it, but not now. I can't now. To-morrow, maybe. . . . By the way," seeking to change the subject, "where did you get that name, Elliot, for

your son? My first wife, Neil's mother, was closely related to the Elliots."

"We named him for his mother. Isabel, my wife, I mean, was an Elliot. She has many relatives in the East. Her nearest of kin there was Osborne Elliot, of Boston."

Lawyer Merriford dropped the Quaker's hand and, stepping back, stared at him intently.

"I understand it now; I understand," he said slowly. "Emily and I have often spoken of your son. He looks so much like Neil. The Elliots all look alike — all of that branch, I mean. Neil's mother was Osborne Elliot's daughter. The boys are cousins. Strange I never thought of it before. I knew my wife had relatives West. Darrow, we live such strenuous lives we do not get acquainted with our own families. I'm proud to be related to you by marriage. I see Neil in Elliot every time I see the boy."

Hiram Darrow grasped Merriford's hand and pressed it warmly.

"I hope your anxiety for Elliot is only momentary. God grant you may not have to walk the path I have followed for the last twelve months." And the two men passed arm in arm down the walkway toward David Lamond.

The day that Lawrence was sacked was a long one in the Vinland Valley. Nature poured out her bounty of sunshine and warm air on a fertile soil awaiting the plowman's conquering hand, but her best gifts seemed like mockery to the scattered, helpless folk who starved in fear under beneficent skies amid luxuriant wastes of opulence. The houseless families, hungry, naked, and frightened, bereft of the sharp necessities of life, struggled now to find how life itself might be saved.

Meanwhile Buford's forces had been busy. In lonely ravines dead men lay unburied. By wayside trails bodies hung from limbs of trees. In defenceless homes women were assaulted with brute violence. In the hours that Elliott Darrow was hemmed in at Lawrence, notices scrawled in red lettering, with skull and cross-bones as a seal, were sent to all the Free State households in the Vinland Valley. The order contained therein commanded immediately exile from Kansas, on penalty of death. Where were these people to go? To the east was Missouri, more perilous and impossible than Kansas; to the west was the prairie wilderness; and beyond that the hostile plains Indians and the desert.

In the middle of the afternoon, Isabel Darrow stood watching the Trail westward, hoping her boy would come soon. She knew only too well what threatened the valley. White Turkey had left the cabin early in the afternoon. Mark was helping a settler left houseless and half dead from his struggle to defend his home in the midnight before. Joe and Patty Wren had gone to the aid of a sick widow.

So the Quaker woman was alone. Standing in the warm afternoon sunshine, in her simple gray dress, with her fair face and her crown of beautiful hair, she made a strange picture on that trouble-darkened day. About her mouth was a firmness only courage can write, and in her large dark eyes glowed the light of absolute trust.

A horseman of the Buford type dashed up the way to the cedars and roughly thrust a paper toward her.

"Read that, and profit by it. No foolishness now——" he ended, with an oath. Then with a learing insolence he leaned toward her.

"I believe I'll stay with you," he said in insulting tones.

He was a giant in stature, and coarseness marked every motion and expression. Isabel knew she was powerless to protect herself, and her prayer went up to God that He would be her Rock of Defence. The pioneer women learned to pray quickly, as they learned also in supremest faith that the day of miracles lasted even until Kansas was admitted to the Union.

So Isabel Darrow prayed, and the answer came, not in a wall of fire that Zechariah promised the Lord would put round about his people, but in a stalwart red Indian who stalked out from the shadows of the cedars.

"You go!" White Turkey pointed down the Trail, with a wave of his hand.

The ruffian stared at him, and then, with a sneer, he cried out:

"Oh, yes, I 'll go. But *I 'll come back.* Don't forget it. *I 'll come back.* Your family had better get out of Kansas inside the time set, — three days. They won't get out after that, not a one of 'em; but *you won't* go, — not you!" He grinned with hateful ugliness and rode away.

"White Turkey, the Lord must have sent thee," Isabel Darrow exclaimed. "I thought thee had gone two hours ago."

The Indian did not smile.

"White Turkey come back. Stay there," pointing to the cedars. "Me go now."

"Can't thee stay till Elliot gets here? We need thee now," Isabel said earnestly.

But the Indian would not yield.

"White woman," he said slowly, "you not say 'stay.' White Turkey *must* go. For *you* White Turkey go." And he strode away without another word.

Then Isabel Darrow in the evergreen shadows lifted her hands in prayer.

"How long, O Lord, must we pay in blood and treasure that thy people may be free? How long shall we endure and sacrifice until we may strike for the right and win to victory?"

Deep in her soul the answer came, clear as a human voice, and she listened, never doubting its message.

"The hour is now. Go forth to victory."

The evening came at last, but Elliot did not appear. Through the long hours of the night Isabel watched and waited and prayed for her boy, who came not. And then the morning dawned, with its mockery of sunshine and sweet air, and another day of waiting and hope and dread followed.

By midday word reached the cabin that Hiram Darrow's white horse was lying dead in the ravine by the Hole in the Rock, with a bullet hole in its side.

"The end of peace," Mark said bitterly. "Now, it is the black horse for power, and the red-roan for bloodshed. I wonder how long the black horse will live." And Mark clinched his fists in his set purpose. He longed for action, yet he dared not leave his mother alone in the unprotected home.

Little Joe sobbed heart-brokenly in the kitchen doorway, but Isabel went in and out like one in a dream. The earth had gone out from under her feet, and she did not try to think.

Craig Penwin, who had found Pluto wandering down the Trail, took him home on this morning, and Beth heard from him the story of Lawrence and of Elliot's devotion to Rosalind and his cowardly desertion of principles in the crisis of affairs. Craig was a gifted son, and his tale was so well told it left no doubt in Mrs. Lamond's mind.

"I believe I am as set as my husband is," she said to

herself. "I had so built on Elliot's worth, I resent Craig's telling me what I must believe. Oh, dear! he had such a winning way. Nobody could help liking him — not even David. It's been the hardest fight of his life to turn against the boy. But it's all over now."

As for Beth, she steadfastly refused to doubt Elliot's loyalty, and scouted the idea of his being afraid; but the well-told account of his affectionate devotion to Rosalind St. Felix, who needed no protection in Lawrence, a thing all Lawrence knew and remarked upon — that was the stab that hurt. But she should not blame him, she told herself. He was shut out indefinitely from her own home; why should n't he go where he chose? And she knew his first choice would be Rosalind, and yet she would not have had it so.

Late in the afternoon, Tarley Penwin brought the news of the white horse in the ravine and the still missing Elliot.

Beth and her mother sat side by side on the settle with hand clasped in hand.

"Better so than a coward and a traitor," Mrs. Lamond said, for neither one questioned how the unknown part of the tragedy would finally be told.

"Yes, mother, better so," Beth said, shutting her lips with that stern strength a daughter of David Lamond might possess.

But in secret she kissed the gold chain and wept hot tears of anguish, comforted with only one thought, — he was hers, now and forever. No dainty little lady like Rosalind St. Felix could ever rob her now. No stern father could set his face against her. And he had died for his principles. Surely the slaughtered horse could mean nothing else, although Craig had adroitly intimated that he was on the eve of slipping out to Missouri and

away to Indiana again, where he could safely turn Abolitionist and preach his Quaker cant.

But, however much Craig Penwin may have colored the reports from Lawrence to suit his own cause, he was outspoken in his bitter criticism of the men with whom his father trained daily; he defied and denounced Buford and his measures; he went wherever he chose and said whatever it pleased him to say; and because he was Colonel Penwin's son, and a believer in slavery, the men were forced to laugh at him and take his words in good part. He had the freedom of the country, and the courage of his convictions, and the manners of a gentleman, and he helped more than one settler; but he was limited in his scope, for he carried a divided heart and gave sympathy or withheld it through personal motives always.

Early in the afternoon, Patty Wren came trotting to the Darrow cabin.

"Mis' Darrow," she said, with a little chirp of sympathy that was vastly comforting, "you 'll feel better doin'n any other way. Ef I was n't doin' I 'd be settin' by the edge of the ravine puttin' ashes on my head an' rentin' my sackcloth. You must be doin'. Ain't there nobody we can appeal to? Nobody?"

"Yes," Mark said — his voice was hard and void of all feeling, and it made Patty shiver — "there 's John Brown. If thee would let me, I 'd go to him and ask him to help us. We are ordered to leave Kansas in three days. We are not going, but what will we do?"

"You 've hit it, Mark. Take Cotton Mather and ride for your life. Go to John Brown. They ain't nobody else left anywhere now."

"Oh, Patty Wren, shall I send another boy away? Thee knows how full of danger the country is. Even

Elliot, big and brave, and strong as he was——" She could say no more.

"Mis' Darrow"—Patty's eyes were bright with a sublime trust—"Mis' Darrow, the Lord don't never lay on us no more 'n we can bear, but He asks us to trust Him and to help ourselves. Now the enemy 's closin' on us. Our men folks is up to Lecompton, in jail, or dead, or driv' off. Our houses is burned. Our crops is dwindlin' away, an' now we 're ordered by the wholesale to leave the country. For more 'n a week the orders has been goin' out. Now, let 's trust to the Lord, who don't never fail us ner forsake us, an' do what we can. Send Mark with your prayers an' blessin' down to John Brown an' ask him to help. Cokey says he 's the coolest, bravest, settest man ever walked the Good Bein's footstool. Send Mark; he might find Elliot."

Isabel Darrow rose up and went to Mark. "My boy, will thee go?" she asked, looking into his eyes with all a mother's love. "There is danger in every step, but—with the Lord there is safety. This is his world, Mark. He will not suffer thee to perish, save by his will."

Mark Darrow never forgot his mother's beautiful face, as she stood before him there. He was a man now in strength and purpose, and he had always been a daring, fearless boy.

"Mother, I am not afraid. I 'll go to John Brown, and maybe I can find Elliot—or some trace of him. I don't believe he is dead." Mark's voice was very firm.

"And neither don't I," Patty Wren said, determinedly.

"It seems like a forlorn hope, and yet, God is good. Let us trust him that the best will come to us."

Elliot's mother looked much like her son, as a sweet, brave smile played over her countenance. In her heart she knew the odds were hopelessly tremendous against

finding her boy alive. He must be wounded and may be dying even then. But she looked up to the blue Kansas sky, and He, whose is the earth and the seas, sent comfort to her soul.

Before another hour Mark Darrow, on Coke Wren's hard-mouthed little pony, was speeding away to find the man who had promised the ten years of trouble in the October nutting time.

As Mark rode along, his spirits rose to a buoyancy they had not known for hours.

"I believe we'll get help, and I believe Elliot is safe somewhere. Dear boy," he mused, "the best brother ever lived. He can't be lying in some of these ravines, dead. I'll find out where he is before I go to mother again, so help me, God. Living or dead, I'll know something to tell her and Joe." And on he rode.

In the records of history there are hundreds of authentic accounts, many of them unprintable for their barbarity, of the cruelties of the border ruffians during the years of Territorial troubles in Kansas. The high tide of all this cruelty was reached in the May time of 1856. And as yet, resistance was offered only as a last extremity of self-defence. The policy of retaliation and of offense, as well as defence, belongs to the later years. The pioneers submitted long before that day came. The afternoon shadows were lengthening when Mark Darrow rode into a camp of armed men on Ottawa Creek. It was the camp of the Pottawatomie Rifles. This company of men from the region south and east hastily called the day before to march to the defence of Lawrence, had been halted here by the news that Lawrence was now beyond help from them. Not so the countryside through which the beautiful Marais des Cygnes and its tributaries flow. The settlers of this fertile

region, with its clear streams, its sunny uplands, and leafy hollows, like the settlers of the Vinland Valley, cowered in terror, and knew not whither to flee. Their wails of distress and pleas for succor had come hither to the camp of the Pottawatomie Rifles, halted briefly on the banks of Ottawa Creek.

At the edge of the camp Mark slid from his pony, and, leading it behind him, asked the first man he met to take him to John Brown's.

"That's him out yonder," the man replied, pointing to a figure sitting alone in the shade of a huge elm tree.

Mark deftly knotted his bridle rein about the limb of a sapling, and then went forward to where John Brown sat. The eyes of youth are keen, and Mark was quick to note every detail of the scene before him.

John Brown, a prairie claim-holder and farmer, plainly dressed, bare-headed, with his gun across his lap, sat gazing at the winding course of the creek before him. Yet his eyes seemed looking at nothing there, but through everything and beyond everything, he was looking into a vast, far future. And so broad was the scope of that vision, small wonder is it that he noted little of the landmarks of the way.

"Mr. Brown," Mark said, lifting his cap, "may I speak to you a minute?"

John Brown looked up at the big, muscular, boyish figure before him; at the honest face, and clear, fearless eyes. The bloom of health showed through the tan of the yet unbearded cheek, and the courage of inexperience gave a care-free bearing in spite of the burden on the young heart. The older man smiled kindly, and extending his hand, said:

"How do you do, Darrow? What can I do for you?"

"Mr. Brown, I suppose I have no claim on you to

ask you for help. But I don't know where else to go now. My father is in jail at Lecompton for treason. He helped to rescue Branson last November. They have tried to burn our house, but we fought them off. My brother Elliot was waylaid and lost between Lawrence and home last night, we are ordered to leave Kansas, and my mother's life is threatened. My mother"—— Mark suddenly ceased speaking.

"Go on, my boy," Brown said, kindly.

"It's no use," Mark replied. The light went out of his young eyes, and he added, bitterly: "Everybody else is just like we are. There is no help anywhere."

Mark threw himself on the ground and said no more.

John Brown looked silently at the boy before him, sitting with drooping shoulders and sorrow-smitten countenance.

"Young man, you are right. Your case is just the common lot, and we endure it all until we break."

"Why should we not strike back?" Mark flashed the question out.

Brown grasped his gun tightly. "We will — we must. There is no other way."

"When?" the boy asked.

"Now," came the answer. "Let your pony feed and rest. You have come fast. In the cool of the evening, go home — carefully, mind you. But you will mind. Tell your mother she shall be protected. So your brother is dead? A fine young man, he was."

"No, he's not dead — he's lost. I'm going to hunt for him."

"Where?"

"I don't know."

"Then don't waste time."

"But I will," Mark said, defiantly, and John Brown smiled grimly.

"Waste it then, but save your horse's time and strength, now. It will be the better for you. Also, you 'll not be such an easy mark in the dark."

With these words, Brown rose and joined the leaders of the rifle company. Mark sat in the edge of the group and listened as one may hear deliberation upon his own doom, so vital was the issue in that little camp that day. No voice came out of the May breezes wandering through the woodland — no message was written in the waving prairie grasses — no murmuring prophecy in the shining waters of the Ottawa, slipping down to Marais des Cygnes; nothing in the quiet shade in the midst of that company of strong, determined men to say that the judgments of that hour must go far and far toward swaying all the future of mankind.

As Mark listened, his heart forgot to beat. The burden on his mind, the help he came to secure, seemed such a small part of all the anguish and dire need and unspeakable atrocity, that called on these men for rescue and redress. The names of those on whom vengeance was long overdue were not all familiar ones to the boy, and he wondered afterward how he could have remembered them and their deeds so minutely, for no word of that conference was ever lost from his memory. Round and round in his brain they tramped until he knew them all:

Henry Sherman, better known as "Dutch Henry," of Dutch Henry's Crossing, on the Pottawatomie Creek — cattle-thief, saloon-keeper, drunkard, quarrelsome, hater of Free-State men, or any other free thing; a terror to the defenceless, a menace to human life — and William Sherman, brother to "Dutch Henry" — a little worse in

everything wherein his brother was vile, and withal much less intelligent, depending on his brother for protection in all his acts;

Their neighbor, Allen Wilkinson, boon companion to the Shermans — a member of the Kansas bogus legislature, elected by fraudulent votes while he was yet living in Missouri; insufferably contemptible even under the law, without the law he was unspeakably vile, attacking men and assaulting women — all of whose deeds meek Free-State men were expected to endure with mildness and patience;

And the Doyles — the Doyles! Trash of the earth. Low-down whites under the level of the enslaved negro, amenable to no law, for they understood no law but the rule of their foul lusts. They had brought their blood-hounds with them to Kansas to hunt down fugitive slaves or Free-State white men. They played the spy for other men, tools of every evil power. They did not know the ages of their own children, nor did their children know their own fathers. But, no matter. These Doyles were Kansas settlers, come hither to build up a State. And in their clutches, with such leaders as Wilkinson and the Shermans, must the intelligent, high-born patriotic pioneers suffer silently every indignity only such as these could devise.

As Mark listened to the history set forth in that council, he thought of his father, and of his clean, honest life; of the Quaker home, where reverence for the Creator and a loving trust in the heavenly Father and peace and good-will, brotherly love and equal rights to all men, and women as well, had been the daily teaching. He thought of his mother, beautiful, noble, intelligent, and the stories the riflemen told there of what had befallen the women in other settlements set his brain on fire. He thought of

Elliot, and the sudden loss, forgotten in the intensity of the hour, seemed to crush him to the earth.

And then he remembered David Lamond, the sterling patriot; and Winthrop Merriford, the scholarly statesman; and Coke Wren, indomitable and loving.

"Oh, the men who can make a country," he said to himself. "The noble, brave men. And these stupid, tricky, vile forces must crush their purpose. How can God let such things be?"

Mark caught his breath. The mind of the council was crystallizing into a plan. How could the Quaker boy know that he sat in the presence of greatness, then; of ambassadors chosen to do a world service in these beginnings?

"The hour to strike has come. It is the day of God's retribution. We shall be judged by Him whom we believe sends us out now; all other judgments are as nothing."

Mark never knew who spoke. The words were big with the destiny of a state in their meaning. The declaration had followed the pleading of a messenger just come into the company with a cry more bitter than any others yet heard there. The boy saw John Brown leap to his feet, and his face was like the face of Moses when he came from the side of old Horeb, where was the burning bush and the voice of the "I Am?" Brown stood listening to every syllable of the man praying for the helpless folk on Kansas claims along the Pottawatomie.

"In God's name, who will keep back the Shermans and the Doyles and Wilkinsons, and all their crew, from assaults on these defenceless people?" the messenger entreated.

"I will attend to these fellows."

It was John Brown who spoke. Mark Darrow did

not know why a picture in the big old family Bible came to his mind then. It was the picture of the desert and the thirst-mad Israelites on the burning wastes. And in the foreground the big, dark rock, from which the stroke of the grand old warrior's rod had brought the cool, life-giving water gushing abundantly forth.

To the Quaker boy John Brown looked like Moses in that moment. He did not follow the deliberations so carefully now, for his own famishing lips seemed to have been cooled by water, and he was content. He knew, indeed, there was careful weighing of issues and much lining up of forces, choosing and rejecting. But through it all one thread of thought ran strong and firm. The hour to strike had come. The day of retaliation was at hand.

The council broke up. Then Mark saw John Brown surrounded by a little group of men, and he stepped nearer, drawn by a magnetism of which he was unconscious. Brown saw him and called him by name.

"Darrow, go home now. Tell your good mother the justice of God will not fail. Good-by." His voice was as a woman's, and in his eyes a fatherly sympathy dwelt.

Mark lingered still, while half a dozen men, with John Brown and a driver, mounted a wagon, and stood surrounded by the Riflemen. The men in the wagon were heavily armed, and Mark noted the gleaming cutlasses and bowie-knives they wore.

"We go now," Brown was saying. "Drive south. This is our work. We have chosen it; we will do it. It is for freedom and humanity. Good-by." He waved his hand.

A burst of cheers from those who remained; a waving of caps; a sending forth of many a "God-speed!"

Then the Quaker boy mounted his pony and turned his face toward the Vinland Valley.

All this was on a Friday. Two days later when the Sabbath came, the Territory, and later the Nation, was startled with the unparalleled story of a Free-State uprising. Bill Sherman, Allen Wilkinson, and the three Doyles — father and two sons — had been taken from their homes in the dead of night and silently sent to their doom,

> With all their crimes broad blown as flush as May.

Those who took the sword had perished by the sword. The Pottawatomie Massacre, the first blow for the real freedom of Kansas, like a thunderbolt from a clear sky, dropped into the hitherto one-sided record of the struggle for supremacy in the Kansas Territory and became an event fixed for all time in the annals of the West. Its horrors were rehearsed, and its atrocity bitterly denounced by the South and the misunderstanding North.

But to the men who accomplished it, the perspective of Time has been magnanimous.

> And the hooting mob of yesterday in silent awe return
> To glean up their scattered ashes into History's golden urn.

CHAPTER XXII

THE ENDURING PROMISE

So much we miss
If love is weak, so much we gain
If love is strong; God thinks no pain
Too sharp or lasting to ordain
To teach us this. —H. H.

THE first man to get out of the Lecompton "prairie bastile" was Coke Wren, of course. Honorably discharged, too, for Coke would have taken no other kind. But by some shrewd Yankee turn he did not explain, which called out much profanity afterward from those who were caught by the maneuver, he managed to get his freedom.

"I want to know, now, would keepin' a stringy shoat like me fattenin' on State fodder do their precious cause any good? It would take a stack of Coke Wrens 'bout six deep to make one real, straightforward traitor, anyhow. A Yankee's boun' to be all right ef 'you take him by hisself.'"

So Coke declared on the day the powers at Lecompton turned him loose; and then he made the dust fly as he sped down the Trail toward the Vinland Valley. He was loaded with messages from the men he had left imprisoned, and he could not too soon deliver himself of them. And all of them save one brought comfort.

The one was a long letter from David Lamond to his daughter. Full of fatherly love and fatherly authority, it rehearsed the whole story of Elliot's downfall that

Craig had already burned into Beth's mind. And it bound her anew to her sacred promise to him to have no communication with the Quaker until he should see her again. There was a new pathos in all his pleading now, for it came from a father shut in by prison bonds, and it appealed to her loyalty as to her love. Beth kissed the name he had signed and wondered how he would accept the reality when he knew it. This was in the early evening of the day she had heard of Elliot's disappearance — the same day that Mark had gone to the camp of John Brown — and she was numb to the swing of events, moving about as one in a dream.

The coming of Coke was God's providence to the Darrow home. Isabel and Joe and Patty Wren had filled the hours after Mark went away with anything they found to do. But when the evening came, sorrow and dread and anxiety came back to give battle when hands were idle and minds must meet them. The hours dragged by, but there was no sign of Mark's coming to relieve their fears for him.

Into all this Coke Wren walked with the assurance that was sublime. Good news came with him — the certainty that imprisonment would end as all farces must some time; and Hiram Darrow was well and hopeful. Mark would be back all right, too. Coke could give a dozen sane reasons why he knew it. And Elliot? Well, there was chance for hope as for fear. When Mark came back, the two would make a search. He could n't go without a horse, nobody would take him far, and he would n't take himself. Coke chatted cheerfully or sat in sympathetic silence, and his very presence was a blessing. Isabel put to the test of her faith now, clung to the promises made for mothers. The while the sunset

slipped into twilight and evening to the shades of night, and night wore to morning, and still Mark did not come.

"Mis' Darrow," Patty Wren said, softly, as the wan daylight came again, "grip onto your faith a little longer — jest a little. Mark may git drownded some time, but he's not born to be hanged, that boy ain't, an' he'll come in all right-way-to, an' safe. I feel it in a queer feelin' in the top of my head, an' when I git that feelin' I'm never fooled."

"It must be a feeling deep in your heart, isn't it, Patty?" And Isabel smiled bravely. "I am gripping my faith, the faith that God will do his will, and his will must be mine. See! the sunrise was never more beautiful! This is our Father's kingdom. He will defend us."

And so, with her face turned heavenward, leaning on Him who breaketh not the bruised reed, she began her second day.

Meanwhile Mark had left the camp of the Pottawatomie Rifles just after sunset.

"Get pretty far east before you turn north; you won't be so likely to get into trouble." So the camp advised. And to the east Mark went; but too far. A May thunderstorm was swinging up from the southwest, and darkness came early. A mile from camp the boy saw two horsemen in the open plains, so he kept to the ravines, which threw him to the southeast continually. Another mile, and the horsemen were following him. Half a mile more, and he came into the open again. The horsemen were chasing him now, and in the growing darkness the storm cloud loomed black and angry. The country was unknown to him, and Mark knew he was lost.

"If I dared let Cotton Mather have his own way, he'd

take me safe home some time to-night, but the north is cut off now. My only chance is to outrun the dogs, and then cut northeast and trust to weaving back somewhere close to Palmyra."

Mark looked back at the storm cloud and before him, at the rough, unfamiliar way; then he patted the vicious little beast, who cared nothing for caresses.

"Keep your legs and I'll keep my head. We may outrun 'em yet. The storm is going to hammer them as hard as it does us."

And then the race began. A bullet whistled behind the boy in token of what he might expect, and he rode for his life. On and on, to the eastward, he flew. Darker grew the sky and fiercer the enemies chasing madly after an innocent boy, whose life they would snuff out the moment they had the chance to do it.

A burst of thunder followed a blaze of lightning, and the wind sailed into the race where motion was the order. Then the storm came, threshing down on pursued and pursuers. It was pitch dark now, and Cotton Mather, lost, as well as his master, struck out wildly and stubbornly whither he chose. The storm lasted for some time, and when it was over, Mark had no notion of direction nor which way his enemies might be. He halted to get his bearings and to decide what course to take. He was drenched with the rain, and shivering with cold.

A dead calm held for a little space. A perfect flood of lightning illumined all the place, and then inky blackness enveloped it again. In that fierce light Mark saw two horsemen not a hundred feet away looking at him. Then he executed a brilliant maneuver. In the crash of thunder following he swerved his pony to the right and dashed toward the two, passing them deftly, as they sprang in

his direction, with two pistol shots hitting the dark where he had been.

"They thought I'd run the other way; I learned better'n that playing blackman at school, back in Indiana," Mark thought. "Let 'em chase south; I'm going north, if I can find it."

The trick won, and Mark on the now mad pony surged forward blindly for a long way. The darkness lifted, and the boy wandered on, afraid to stop. At last he struck a rugged region that seemed to entangle him in its deep, rocky recesses, and he could find no way to the open country again. Farther and farther he stumbled, until he found himself in a ravine that narrowed and deepened, while its darkness was impenetrable. It was quiet here, with only the woodsy night noises and the trickling of water at the bottom.

Floundering along in the blackness, he struck the water, and the pony's hoofs beat hard upon the shelving rock bottom of the stream. He tried to turn back, but failed. Then the stream bed flattened and broadened, with the little run of waters spreading out thinly here and there upon it. The pony's feet sent out a harsh, hollow sound as they struck the uneven places of the streamlet's bed.

Suddenly a something darker yet than anything in that black place leaped before him, and Cotton Mather sat back so violently on his haunches that any other boy would have been thrown at once.

"What the dickens now?" Mark cried, off his guard.

"Mark Darrow, you fool! Come like a herd of buffalo in here. Keep still!"

It was the voice of White Turkey, and the boy, with nerves so long held tense, slid from his horse and caught the Delaware around the neck.

"Stop," commanded the Indian. "Keep still!"

"But I'm so glad to see you," Mark exclaimed.

White Turkey shook him off.

"I kill you!" he hissed in the boy's ear; and Mark's heart stopped beating. "You keep still. Me get him out now." The tone was hardly audible.

"Get who out?"

"Elliot. You help him quick."

Help him quick! Oh, yes. A wet, shivering boy tumbled down in a heap on the wet stones of the black dell — a boy with a ringing in his ears and points of light before his eyes, who was only dimly conscious of the sound of a pony's feet growing fainter as White Turkey led it away to a place of safety. And all was still. Then a hand of steel suddenly gripped his arms and lifted him up.

"You come," the Indian said. And Mark obeyed.

North from the line of the old Santa Fé Trail to-day, not far from where the village of Palmyra once stood, is a picturesque spot known locally as Coleman's Dell. It is a rugged ravine, with "rocks, crags, and mounds, confusedly hurled," but on a tiny scale; a broken, cliff-walled, secluded place — a picnic ground, with suggestion of wilderness tradition, and full of happy association for the care-free young college folk of the nearby Baker University. Hither the students, sons and daughters of a fearless, prosperous people, come for holiday outings. On the slabs of broken stone they spread their sandwiches and pickles. In the romantic nooks they group themselves fantastically, hilariously, becomingly, for the rapid-firing kodaks. Down the rough, rocky floor, the one-time bed of a lost and forgotten streamlet, they wander in the interests of botany and geology and entomology and one another; and then come gaily home

through the springtime moonlight to paste their trophies of the day in college memory-books.

On that terror-filled night, half a century ago, when Mark Darrow rode his pony into this dark dell, the surroundings were no less wild and picturesque, but in place of the heaps of broken strata one clambers over to-day, there was a floor of rock, seamed and shelving, over which the thread of waters wandered with little trickling noises.

Mark stumbled meekly along after the sure-footed Delaware, conscious only of two facts; he was with a friend, and Elliot was alive. Mark's hair was white at forty-five, and he always declared that the beginning of its silvering was on this night. In the darkness he could only feel his way and trust.

"I've got more respect for you than I have for the Lord," he whispered, irreverently, as he groped about. "I'd never trust anybody but a Delaware to lead me in here."

But White Turkey only grunted for silence, and Mark went blindly after him.

The way narrowed. Then it slipped into a crack in the walled side of the ravine. Blacker and rougher and downward now. Wet, slippery, cold and downward still. A score of feet, they crept like lizards in a crevice barely wider than their bodies, squeezing themselves through narrow spaces. At last they stood in an opening, the blackest place Mark had ever seen. The air was heavy and damp. The stones were cold and wet, but not slimy, and from somewhere came an odor of smoke.

"Stay here!" the Indian commanded.

"I won't need to be hitched," Mark replied.

A lighted candle gleamed presently before him and he began to get his bearings. He was in a cavern of

rock, walls, roof and sides, a tiny chamber tucked snugly under the creek bed with the water trickling along overhead. In later years, by some earthquake or other force, the bed of the stream has been broken into jagged slabs, and the same roofless chamber now makes the pretty wild dell of romantic scenery.

That night it was a hidden cave, concealed by the stream, dark and cold, and reached only by a secret tortuous pathway. But it was the kingdom of heaven to Mark Darrow; for, before him on a heap of dead grasses, lay Elliot, white and limp, his clothing torn and mud soaked, but he was living and conscious.

"Hello, Mark! Are you alive?" Elliot had not lost his smile.

"No, I've passed on!" Mark answered, carelessly, but he sat down beside his brother and hid his face.

Elliot patted his cold hand in silence.

"How did a big overgrown thing like you get yourself through those cracks coming down?" Mark asked, at length.

"I didn't get myself here. I was brought. What of me they couldn't pull through, they left on the other side. It's a convenient system," Elliot said. "My left leg was too long, so they broke it getting me in. I'm an awkward piece of furniture, it seems."

"You always were," Mark said. But in the dark he wiped the tears from his brimming eyes.

"Tell me how it happened, Ellie." The boy's voice was choked.

Elliot related what he remembered of the event at the Hole in the Rock on the night before.

"I thought of a lot of things after the first blow, but mostly of some camphor and turpentine I'd failed to get for mother, because the ruffians filled up

Lawrence and I helped folks what I could. They had shot the horse and it began to go down under me, and I knew I was shipwrecked. The last thing I heard was Boniface Penwin crying out to stop somebody, 'Don't kill him here! Don't kill him here,' for they must have struck me again, and I didn't know anything for a long time. When I did come to myself, I made out that I was being taken somewhere for the finishing off — some place Penwin was not to be told of — and I was to be put where he was never to see nor know of me till I meet up with him on the Judgment Day. I must have dreamed that I heard him say one dead face was all he could stand at the Hole in the Rock."

"I could stand that many anywhere if he'd furnish the face," Mark said, grimly.

"They broke my leg getting me in, but I broke the fellow's head who did it, and he had to take himself off to the Georgians' camp. Then White Turkey, who had been waiting for me by the Hole in the Rock, but got shut off from warning me because I was late, came into the game. He followed us up here as fast as he could, and stampeded the other fellow. Oh, I don't remember it all. It must have happened a thousand years ago." And Elliot turned wearily on his pallet of grasses.

"All right, Ellie, you are here. That's enough," Mark said, cheerily.

"But the rest," Elliot said, "I'll tell you now, before we go."

"How will we go in the dark, Ellie?" Mark asked, eagerly.

"Oh, you and White Turkey will help me what I can't help myself. He couldn't do it alone. Strut a little now. He and that ruffian had it out in a pitched

battle all day and half of last night. The villain tried to smoke us out or get rid of White Turkey first, and then finish me. White Turkey tried to kill him, or get us both out together. He would n't leave me and take the risk of losing both of our lives. And so long as the place was guarded outside, nobody could get in to help us. After dark, he slipped away, and we know he 's gone to get help to finish us."

Elliot smiled up at Mark, whose face was drawn with grief.

"We thought it was the Missouri militia when you came thundering in on top of us, Mark, and from weakness and loss of courage, I must have sort of faded away. I've not had anything to eat since I took dinner at the Eldridge House opening, back in the reign of Queen Anne."

"Or Princess Rosalind," Mark offered.

"Anyway, I 'm short on dates. But now you have come with a horse, and White Turkey has got some kind of a harness for this broken branch to keep it staid till we get out."

"Be quick," White Turkey said. "They get here soon."

The Indian had been improvising a bandage of strips of blanket, knotted securely together.

"Where did you get that?" Elliot asked, as he helped to adjust it about his swollen limb.

"My blanket. Put in here last winter," the Delaware replied.

"Did you bring it from the little draw on this side of Lamonds'?" Elliot asked.

The Indian nodded.

Then, with all haste, and much risk and suffering to Elliot, the three managed to crawl from the cave, and

at last reach the open dell, where Cotton Mather pawed viciously, anxious to be off.

"Does anybody else know of that place?" Mark asked, when they had gained the upland.

"Yes. Pelathe. Penwin don't know. His men think nobody know, only them. Say, nobody ever find where young white brave gone. Me fool white men. Ugh!"

The Delaware grunted in disgust.

The sunrise, whose beauty Isabel Darrow had noted, had hardly lost the sea-shell pink of dawn, when Dr. St. Felix drove up to the cedar-hid cabin on the hill. His face was aglow, but his manner was reserved.

"I come to bring you good news," he said, as the Quaker woman greeted him. "I've just left your two boys, both safe, but a little the worse for wear, especially Elliot. They were asleep when I left, but Mark will be home soon and Elliot after a little."

"I want to know," drawled Patty Wren. "I knowed that queer feelin' was n't in the top of my head for nothin'. Never fooled me yit."

Patty sat down in the door as if her day's work was done. Joe made no sound, but he was standing on his head in the blue grass beside the doorway, in excess of joy words could not convey. Isabel looked steadily at Dr. St. Felix.

"I understand; I had a son once," he said. And then he told her of her own boys.

"They are with the Hoosier family who came out here in November — the Elberts. Got there about midnight, and that Delaware Indian, White Turkey, came right on to Lawrence for me. Elliot will be kept there several days, but Mark will be here to-day. Mr. Elbert will bring him. He will need some care," the doctor added, "and, as Elliot is in good hands, I advise you to

look after Mark first. I brought Rosalind down with me, and she and Mrs. Elbert will not let Elliot suffer."

Dr. St. Felix could not tell by Isabel Darrow's face what she thought, but he knew, as a physician, what was best for her and her sons, and he suggested his commands so kindly, they were generally obeyed.

And Elliot was in good hands. No more motherly soul ever came out of Indiana than Mrs. Elbert, and she had known the young Quaker from his childhood. Under her care he gained so rapidly, he thought her a little severe in enforcing the doctor's orders, for he was impatient to be up and doing. And yet the gentle touch of Rosalind's hands about his pillow, her quick, skillful ministrations, made his illness a pleasure, until one evening when he was lying with closed eyes, dreaming of Beth Lamond, Rosalind had come in softly, and, thinking he was asleep — he lay so still — she had bent over the white face on the pillow and kissed his forehead. Elliot lay very still, thinking of the night he had kissed Beth without her consent. He wondered if Rosalind would feel as he did then.

The next afternoon she left, and he felt her absence keenly, she was such a comfortable friend, yet he was glad to have her go. She was hardly away before he heard a voice in the other room of the cabin, and he forgot Rosalind in the joy of his hungry heart.

"Yes," Mrs. Elbert was saying, "he's doing fine. He's asleep now, so we can say anything we want to. But how could he help doing well? That little French girl, who came down from Lawrence, just seemed to know exactly what he wanted, and he did enjoy her."

Mrs. Elbert never saw two young people together without building a romance for them. And the things

her own colorless life had starved for, she played up in imagination for others.

"But girls always did like Ellie Darrow," she went on, for Beth was a good listener. "I've known him all his life, and even as a little boy the girls were crazy about him."

In the other room, Elliot groaned silently.

"Just like his mother," his hostess continued. "She was the belle of her day. I just know he'll make a match with that little Miss St. Felix, unless the other girls work hard. They say the Lawrence girls are all crazy over him, and my niece is coming from college out here next month — well, he always did like her. She was his first sweetheart. But that French girl's got the inside track, because he's going to be a doctor, and she's pretty near one. And then, would you believe it" — her voice dropped low, so only Beth could hear — "I saw her kiss him last evenin'. He was asleep and never knew it, and she didn't want him to, I don't suppose. But say," in a louder tone, "don't you want to go in and look at him?"

"No, I think not," Beth said.

A hot tear stole down Elliot's cheek, and he turned his face away in shame and sorrow.

"Yes, just run in. He's asleep. He's dressed and propped up comfortable on the lounge. Maybe you wouldn't mind watching by him a half hour, while I knead out my dough to raise. I'm behind with it now."

And good-hearted Mrs. Elbert pushed Beth into the sick-room, more from her love of romantic situations than from any notion of Elliot's needs.

Beth had come out of neighborly courtesy, she told herself, and she had pledged herself not to speak to Elliot because of her father's will. The words of Mrs.

Elbert had cut her all the more deeply because she looked hopelessly now toward her own future. And here, before either one had thought it possible, she was beside him.

Elliot's face was white and marked with the pain he had undergone, but his dark eyes glowed with a glad light, and he smiled radiantly up at Beth.

"It was very kind of you to come," he said. "I'm harmless. You wouldn't abuse a fellow when he can't fight back, would you?"

He was making things so easy for her. She put out her hand and Elliot grasped it quickly, but it was the handclasp of a friend.

"I was so anxious to hear from you," she began.

"Sit down, won't you? The dough needs working, and I must have somebody to look after me." There was a twinkle in his eye, as he made room for her beside him.

"Such a popular fellow ought not lack for attention," Beth replied, mischievously.

Elliot groaned aloud.

"There be things worse than a broken tibia and a wrenched ankle, but I won't complain," he said.

"It might be worse. After to-day, the dear, good soul will have me added to the list," Beth said. Then both were silent.

When the girl spoke again, there was a firmness in her voice.

"Elliot, I ought not come here, I am untrue to father; and if I am false to him, I will be to others."

There was a sweet womanliness about her that made the charm of her girlish face doubly dear to the young man beside her. Quickly, for her strength of will was failing her, she told the contents of her father's letter.

"And you believe that story?" he asked.

"Not about the treachery to the Free-State cause. But, Elliot, are you really trying to make Rosalind St. Felix care for you?"

It would take little effort, she thought, to make any girl do that.

"Do you think, Elizabeth, that I would do that?"

His eyes were fixed on her and the love-light in them made up to Beth for all the sorrow and doubt of the days just past. It was a wonderful thing to have the love of such a man. She could believe all that Mrs. Elbert had said.

The dough-board was thumping on the kitchen table. The house was very still. Outside the landscape was brimming over with the June sunshine. A cool breeze was playing in through the open door and Beth, with her golden hair and her deep gray eyes, over which the long black lashes drooped now; and Elliot, with all his young red-blooded manhood of strength and honor—somehow these things made the plain cabin a place these two might never forget.

"Elliot, father is in prison," Beth said.

"So am I," Elliot answered.

"But how can you ever make him understand?" the girl said, pleadingly.

"I'm never going to try, nor would you want me to, dearie." How gentle his tones were! "Elizabeth, the men who battle for this State to make it gloriously free are not discouraged with one defeat. Their cause is just, and they bide their time. So is mine, and I bide my time. If you will let me," he added, softly. "But, Beth, you and I must keep our faith, or break it now. My promise to wait your time, and your promise to your father are secondary bonds, time limits only. I believe it will be given to me to prove myself worthy in your father's

eyes, if I am true to you. But if I am worthy in your eyes, Beth, I shall be satisfied. If the test comes and you must choose between us, which bond at last is to be unbreakable? Shall I give you back the locket then, or hang it on the little chain and let you keep both for my sake?"

He folded his arms as if to shut her out, and waited. She looked up at him with a glorious light in her darkly flashing eyes.

"Elliot Darrow, at the last test, it is my home, my hope, my life, that belongs to me. All other promises must give way before one alone. The unbreakable bond is between us two. I shall keep the gold chain and — when the time comes — maybe you will put the locket on it. It is yours to give now, for I have given it to you, the only one to whom my father said it might be given."

She reached out her hands to him, and he took them hungrily.

"Till death us do part," he said, softly. "Henceforth, there are to be no more doubts."

"Elliot, I must go now. May I tell you something?"

"You don't need to go to do it?" Elliot replied.

"Yes, I do. I must tell you and run. Mrs. Elbert told me that she saw Rosalind kiss you when you were asleep, and didn't know it."

"I wasn't asleep, and I did know it. But I would never have told it," Elliot said. "Do you think you would have done as much for me if you had been in her place?"

"I don't think — know I would not," Beth declared.

"Well, I wouldn't have let you, anyhow," Elliot said, with serious countenance.

"But, Elliot, has your nurse that right?" Beth asked, earnestly.

"No, Elizabeth; I kissed somebody once when I had no right to do it. If Rosalind feels as I did, I pity her. She is an impulsive girl, but good as gold. I am not vain enough to think she would think seriously about me very long unless I encouraged her, which I am not contemptible enough to do. For, dearie, you women may think you feel unhappy when you cannot care for some man who wants you to, but I don't believe you can know how a man feels when the same thing comes to him. You can be coldly courteous and still be a lady. A man can't do that always and be a gentleman. Don't misunderstand Rosalind. She will never throw herself where she is n't wanted. But — well, I have a locket to keep untarnished. My honor, likewise, is something I must not blacken."

Beth was standing now and Elliot held her hand in good-bye as if he could not let her go.

"I 'll keep my word to you, and you will be true to your promise to your father. But that cannot keep me from reading a message for me in beautiful gray eyes, when I can look into them now and then. And it must be that I shall be a better man, because I cannot have my own way now." One long handclasp, and then Elliot smiled up at Beth. "The oven door is slamming, so the bread is shelved. I think it ought to have been kneaded more, don't you?"

And the two turned to Mrs. Elbert, who now had food for a new romance.

CHAPTER XXIII

BROKEN BONDS

It matters not how straight the gate,
How charged with punishment the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.

— Henley.

ELLIOT'S recovery was rapid — because the girls came to see him, and cheered him, so his nurse, Mrs. Elbert, said; because he had studied medicine and knew how to take care of himself, in the pride of his youth, he thought, but he did not say it; because he was in vigorous health, and strong by inheritance, Dr. St. Felix averred. But his mother, in her secret place of prayer, with her Madonna face lifted heavenward, gave the praise to Him from whom come all good and perfect gifts.

Elliot brought no suit for assault with intent to kill, although he knew each of the three men who had lain in wait for him by the Hole in the Rock. Suit in the civil court at Lawrence, with Sheriff Jones sent to arrest his would-be assassins! Jones in civil court could not have proved that he was not himself accessory to the same crime! There was no law in Kansas in those days whereby a Free-State man might guard his own life, save the law of a muscular arm, a ready brain, and nimble heels. These failing, the loaded musket and the sharpened bayonet must be the law of protection. Moreover, the summer that followed the Pottawatomie Mas-

sacre was one of unparalleled strife. In the archives of history it is recorded that the sack of Lawrence was to be followed with the wholesale sweeping of the Territory by the Pro-Slavery forces. Burning for property, banishment for families, and bullets for all who remained against orders! The burning and banishment had already begun, as well as the firing of many a murderous bullet. A general massacre of settlers in the Territory was only a night or two away, when John Brown and his six followers fell upon the Pottawatomie and slew five men. With all that had gone before of boast and swagger and sneer and threat, and with crimes unnamable behind them, the slaying of these five ruffians by seven Free-State men seems a mere hint at retaliation. But it threw such consternation into every Pro-Slavery camp that the old prophecy of one putting a thousand to flight, and two routing ten thousand, seemed more than a figure of rhetoric. It is marvelous even now, when the rancor of it all is but a memory, that the shock should have been so tremendous to men already past-masters in such methods of controlling a Territory. And it will be the calm judgment of all future years that the first and most decisive blow struck for freedom in the West fell on the night of the Pottawatomie Massacre.

It was but the natural law that revenge should strike hardest at John Brown. He was the foe of all foes to be dreaded. And through all the summer days of that eventful year, the Pro-Slavery powers were alternately hunting for him or fleeing from him. The mere announcement that John Brown was heading toward a community sent panic and terror to the forces opposing him. One son he had seen shot down in this mad strife, and one was driven insane from torture. But old John Brown stayed not his hands from fighting any more. For

these were the days of peril and power in the building of a State.

Across the Vinland Valley and beyond its borders, the Kansas warfare was waged, while June ran into July and July melted into August, and none could prophesy what a day would bring forth. Black Jack, Franklin, Palmyra, Hickory Point, Osawatomie, and with lesser violence Bull Creek, Ottawa Creek, Prairie City, and other and yet other names are marks for the shrines of a reverent generation for whose defence and strength to-day there was reared

A wall of men
On Freedom's Southern line,

a half century ago.

In this summer's strife it fell to Elliot Darrow and Coke Wren to lead in the defensive action. Elliot was too much of a Quaker to take the field with John Brown. He stayed by the valley in its need for protection, and between times he was a farmer. Not so Mark Darrow. With a man's strength and a boy's impetuous spirit, he had flung himself into the fray from the night of the Pottawatomie Massacre.

"Mother," he said, when he heard the first call, "I'm going to John Brown. Thee will let me, for I cannot stay away." He had his arms about his mother, and his voice was winning. "I have wanted to be with that man since the day I saw him up on the bluff, when we were nutting in October."

Isabel put her hands on either side of his face and studied the boy-spirit back of it.

"I know it, Mark. I knew it that night, when John Brown stayed with us — the night Jupe came here, and White Turkey. Thee is a Quaker, Mark."

"Yes, secondarily, I am; primarily, I'm Mark Darrow, and I must fight out my own course just like William Penn fought his; in my own way, I mean. Does thee suppose, mother, that we are all to follow one line? The Quakers have been persecuted long enough. I'm going to do some of the persecuting now. It's the only way to make history. Watch for the future annals of Kansas. See Mark Darrow's name writ large."

"By the grand jury?" Joe queried.

But Isabel spoke earnestly.

"My boy, go thy own way. I am willing thee should, not because I think thee is right, but because thee thinks thee is. And if thee must turn persecutor — do it well, but mercifully, dearie. The only real joy in conquest is the memory of kindness to the conquered. And God give thee victory."

And so Mark went his own way.

With the advent of Governor Geary, in September, David Lamond and Hiram Darrow at Lecompton returned to the Vinland Valley, and Winthrop Merriford came back to Lawrence. Coke Wren, who during his stay at Lecompton did not mention his fishing experience, now hastened to Lawrence.

"Merriford, I'm glad to see you," he drawled. "Always glad to see you, in jail or out. What be you goin' to drive at first, now?"

Coke's face was veiled in stupid indifference, but the lawyer scented a leading.

"I'm going to settle affairs here. They have been neglected for months, nearly all the year, in fact. Then I'm going to start out and not come back until I find Neil Merriford."

"Hm!" Coke ejaculated sympathetically. "I want to

know. Say," after a pause, "where's that nigger, Jupiter St. Augustine Penwin Roxbury, LL.D., T-Y-ty?"

"Sitting by the back door here, listening to us, I suppose," Merriford answered wearily. "I am about ready to give him up."

"An' you a lawyer, an' smart in spite of it. I'm surprised at you. But, Merriford, I've come to help a little with this Neil business."

"Can you?" Winthrop Merriford's face brightened.

Coke carefully unrolled a package from its wrappings and displayed a somewhat rusted revolver.

"I went fishin' down at the Hole in the Rock last May," he drawled. Then his tone changed. "I found this right near the edge, on a little shelf runnin' 'round about a foot down below the surface. Patty and me worked hours to clean it. Then I brought it up here to see if that bullet I brought you'd fit it. It does. But you was gone to Lecompton for your summer outing." Coke had to joke to break the pressure of his thoughts. "So I've put in the summer follerin' this thing up. It was easier'n tendin' a crop, with a gun in each boot-leg an' a knife in your teeth. They's a name on the plate there on the handle. Where'd you say Neil went?"

Coke laid the revolver on the lawyer's desk and looked meditatively out of the door.

With trembling hand, Winthrop Merriford took the weapon and turned it to the light. In the silver plate on the handle he saw the letters —

NEIL MERRIFORD,
BOSTON, MASS.

"Tell me, Wren," he said in a low voice.

"You tell me first, Merriford, an' then we'll line up for somethin'."

"I've little to tell you, Coke, that you don't know. The year Neil graduated he became engaged to a beautiful girl from Georgia. Her name was Tarleton, Lucy Tarleton. Last year Neil went South to marry her. He wrote me a line, just a line, to say there was trouble he could not explain, and that he would go back to Boston alone. Then he quit writing. Our Wakarusa War was on, and, you remember, I went back East just after our peace-party. The day I left, Dr. St. Felix called me into his office and we had a long conversation. He knew Miss Tarleton very well, and he also knew Neil — met him in Atlanta. And he told me his fears for what I found was true. When I reached Boston Neil had disappeared. He came into Atlanta last September, and he acted strangely, as if his mind was burdened. Then he dropped out of sight." The lawyer ceased and turned the revolver in his hands.

"Is that all?" Wren asked.

"No, one thing more. Miss Tarleton is dead."

"Hm! I want to know," Coke said sympathetically, and the lawyer continued.

"I came home, intending to attend to matters here and then to go South myself. Before I could get away there was a price put on my head in Missouri because I am connected with the New England Emigrant Aid Society, and then they got me on a writ of 'Conventional Treason' and I've been shut up in that tent bastile at Lecompton. Now I am going to run this thing down. Can you help me? I know you can. Coke Wren, I knew your father before you. There was never a shrewder, more honest, nor more kindly family in all New England than the Wrens. I know you have come to help me."

"Oh, the Wrens are well enough. I'm the only one ever got in jail — the Aaron Burr of the family. That's

the blot onto our scutchin, but I 'm hoping the scutchin can stand a dab or two. Treason ain't so bad when they 's a lot of traitors, an' suitable chaperons."

Then Coke grew serious.

"Tell me all you know about that Senegambian, Jupe," he said.

"Jupe ran away from Georgia because he was sold to a man he feared. Came to our house, as you know, and we fed him. Then he saved Neil's life on the Charles River when his boat capsized. Neil always had a horror of water, although he was brought up beside the ocean. When Jupe's overseer came after him the next day, Neil protected Jupe and he kept his freedom." The lawyer paused.

"But after that, Merriford?" Coke asked. "Why did he go South again?"

"The same thing that took Neil there took this black man also — the love of a woman." Merriford's face was full of pathos. "Jupe's wife was still in bondage, and he said he would bring her North or stay with her until he was sold again and forced to go. Coke Wren, if slavery had no other curse, the curse that will fall upon this nation for its utter disregard of marriage vows for the enslaved race will surely bring down God's vengeance on us."

"But the outcome?" Coke queried.

"Jupe says his wife is dead. So is Miss Tarleton. Jupe's last master was Boniface Penwin. It was Roxbury's overseer who came to Boston after him. Now he declares he is free, and he is entirely secure in his own mind. Some sense of duty, I believe, keeps his lips closed. Roxbury is with Buford now. That 's all I 've been able to find out. There is more to come, as soon as I can give it the time. Now it 's your turn, Wren."

The lawyer smiled faintly on the little Yankee.

Coke Wren was only five feet three inches, "from beak to feet," as Patty had said. He was thin and wiry and homely. He was not rich nor highly educated, and his occupation in life was to till the soil. But he came of staunch old New England stock, and blood will tell. He was honest, frugal, clever in his financial dealings, and abundantly kind-hearted. But his gift was shrewd penetration and quick, accurate judgment. And his name was his bond no less in those years than when in a later time it stood at the head of the large banking business his genius made widely influential. But he never looked like a bank president. No more did he on that day seem able to unravel a tangled mystery for the keenest mind in the Territory. He sat in meditation for a while, then he said:

"I can save you some time. Call in the followin', to-wit: Jupiter Roxbury, nigger; White Turkey, Delaware Injun; Pelathe, Shawnee Injun; Dr. Pierre St. Felix, pro-slavery man an' gentleman; Elliot Darrow, Quaker, game-cock. He's over to St. Felix's office now, analyzin' specimens with Miss St. Felix. They'll keep. Bring him and Doc together. Jupe's outside the back door. The Injuns are down by the Kaw, fishin' and waitin' to be called up here. They's two more I've got on the bait if they get into town to-day. If not, to-morrow'll do. Merriford, I believe we can settle this here in a couple of hours, all except fixin' the blame. The Coroner's got to do that. But what you've got to do is to convince 'em all that a bad promise is better broken ef life and justice are in the balance."

Merriford grasped Wren's hand.

"You are the salt of the earth, Coke Wren," he said huskily.

"Yep, I look like a codfish or herring, I know." The glass of the open door made a sort of mirror against the wall, and Coke grinned at his own reflection there. But tears were glistening in his eyes, for all his joking.

In a few minutes all those named for summoning were lined up in the lawyer's office, waiting to follow the leading of the little Yankee.

Across the street a red-roan horse stood hitched. Presently, around the corner, behind the livery stable, two men from Buford's camp tied their horses and, instead of coming to the main street, strolled down the alley to the nearest saloon. They were Roxbury, the Atlanta gambler, and Jack Bobbs, his henchman.

Inside Merriford's office Wren was first to speak.

"Gentlemen, we are here in the interests of a fellow-citizen, Winthrop Merriford, who has been a blessin' to this Territory from the minute he came into it, and the friend an' helper of all of us. Now it's our time to do a little for him, not because he deserves our help alone, but because the thing before us is a human interest; an' the rights and wrongs of human business is our common business while we're on the Lord's footstool. Merriford, tell 'em what you've told me 'bout your son, Neil."

Briefly, the lawyer retold the story.

"Gentlemen," he said when he had finished, "if any of you know anything that will help me to unravel this thing more quickly than I can do it alone, in God's name, tell me now. If you are bound by any pledge whose breaking would be a greater crime than the crime against my son's life, then I do not ask you to say one word. But if you are bound by bonds of fear or necessity,"—he was looking at Jupe now,—"if you are holding to a promise whose breaking would mean a lesser crime, then remember that most of the great evils in this world have

grown out of the poor judgment of men in choosing the lesser of two principles of right rather than their deliberate choice of wrong. St. Felix, are you willing to help me here?"

Dr. St. Felix's dark face was very grave as he said:

"Gentlemen, I'm a Georgian, with all the loyalty of a Southern man to the institutions of my inheritance and teachings. But I have lived in Kansas long enough to see how terribly the North and the South misjudge each other. I didn't come here to try to force this State into the ranks of the Southern States, although I shall give my vote for the establishment of slavery here. In my judgment, it is the only way to control the race. You knew my views from the first, yet the stanchest Free State man, the rankest Abolitionist among you, has never failed to show me all courtesy. And I hope I have not been lacking altogether in my duty to you. All this is to show into what evil hands the swing of affairs may fall. You cannot judge my South by Buford's men, although I must confess that Buford and other leaders are accounted among our good citizens."

"St. Felix, may God hasten the day when we shall know more of your kind of Southern men and they may know us," Merriford said.

"But that is not my business here now," St. Felix continued. "I came to Kansas to get away from a city where my life had been unhappy, and to follow up one man and bring him to the justice he deserves. We French people may feel things in a way you colder-blooded Northern folk do not. I'll be brief. I had a son I loved — well, you understand, Merriford. He met and admired Lucy Tarleton Penwin, sister to Colonel Boniface Penwin, — your Lucy Tarleton, Merriford."

"What!" exclaimed the lawyer. "You can't mean it."

"Yes; Lucy would not keep the name when she went North. I'll tell you why. My son, Pierre, met her and loved her, for she was made for that. She was fond of him. I believe she would have loved him some time. But Pierre loved her madly. He didn't suit Boniface; he was not rich enough. Boniface has been a spender all his life, and he was on the verge of ruin, but he would not retrench. He never will. To be brief again, he led my boy astray — set him to gambling in Roxbury's den, a gilded hell in Atlanta. The stake, if he won enough to suit the Colonel, was to be Lucy's hand. He lost. He took his own life because of it. The St. Felix blood is impulsive."

St. Felix paused, and Elliot, looking at him, saw a tragedy the years might bring to himself, and he set his purpose firm.

"Little Rosalind shall never suffer by me," he said to himself. "I can see where this might end. I must end it now."

"I had only one son," St. Felix went on.

"Lucy Penwin went North, not heart-broken, for she had only liked Pierre. She changed her name, dropping the Penwin, in her anger and sorrow, and the temporary notoriety in Atlanta. I believe she did love Neil Merriford as — he deserved. Darrow, you look much like Neil."

"Yes, they are related. His father and I unraveled that at Lecompton," Merriford explained. "Go on."

"Penwin gambled more and more, losing to desperation at last. He had several slaves. One, Jupe, here, and his wife, he had promised never to sell, for they were really Lucy's by inheritance, and she was devoted to them."

Jupe clasped his big black hands, and his face was drawn with grief.

"Roxbury was Penwin's evil magnet. And at last he put up Jupe in his need for money, and Roxbury won. I believe, Merriford, Jupe would better tell the rest."

St. Felix looked wearied and stricken, not only with the memory of his own sorrow, but with the grief of his friend as well.

Jupe rose to his full height, and there was something pitiful in his child-like manner, so grotesquely out of keeping with his tremendous strength. But to the student of human nature there was a dignity about him that commanded respect.

"Gentlemen," he said, with courtesy, "I made a promise to save my life. I sold myself for my freedom. I've been a bigger slave these months in Kansas than in all the years of my life down Souf. I thought I could keep my word an' *write* what I know and it would be all right. I learn to read an' write, so I'd find how to break my bondage. What I learn tells me if I write I break my promise same as if I speak it with the words of my mouf. So I is no nearer out of bondage 'n I was before I learned readin' an' writin'.

"Now, gentlemen, I kin be dead, but I can't be no slave. I'se bound to be free. I'll break my promise. I'll tell all I said I would n't tell, an' I may be killed. But, bless the Lord, I'll be free. 'Fore God Almighty, I never be slave after that. Gimme liberty, ef death comes with it."

More sublime than Patrick Henry's immortal plea, was the innocent heroism of the unlettered son of an enslaved race.

"'Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free,' that's what that preacher down to Palmyry preached from last Fall. It was a inspiration to all of

us," Coke Wren said more to himself than to anybody else.

"Jupe, I've always believed if you would tell me what is on your mind you would be happier and maybe safer. But I do not insist," Winthrop Merriford said.

And at last Jupe broke his bonds.

"Gentlemen, I is a free man. Miss Lucy Tarleton Penwin done give me my free papers up to Boston. I belong to her. Nobody else but to Miss Lucy, an' she say she go home an' give my wife her free papers. Mars'r Penwin never have no right to sell me to Roxbury, 'cause I was n't his 'n to sell. An' I run cl'ar to Boston. Then with my free papers I go back after my wife. She mean the same to me that Mars'r Neil's mother mean to you, Mars'r Merriford. I mean same to her you mean to little Miss Rosalind, maybe, Mars'r Darrow, some day." Jupe said this innocently, but it brought the blood to Elliot's cheek. Merriford smiled, but Dr. St. Felix was impassive.

"Well, Jupe?" Coke Wren said.

"Gentlemen, when I git back Souf I show Mars'r Roxbury my free paper, an' he turn on Penwin. Then Boniface Penwin done sold hisself to the devil for a few hundred dirty dollars, for he sold Miss Lucy to Roxbury. Yes, sah; he gambled his own sister away, 'cause gamblin' done rot his brain and dry up his heart. That's what hit done to him; that's gamblin's way. They's white slaves same as black ones sometimes, an' Miss Lucy Tarleton was sold body an' soul to that gamblin' Roxbury for to be his wife. My pretty Miss Lucy!"

Jupe's voice faltered, then he went on:

"When Miss Lucy find she done sold, she rebel. She say she free an' I free an' my wife hers to make free. But we ain't. They had a awful quarrel, for the Pen-

wins have hot tempers. Yes, sah; and high-stringed, all of 'em. Mars'r Merriford, ef I done break you-all's heart, you 'member you ask me yourself to tell you all I know. An' my own heart, hit done broke long 'go."

"Yes, Jupe, go on," Merriford said gravely.

"Gentlemen, Miss Lucy she won't be sold, an' somehow — nobody know how — she's dead. When Mars'r Neil Merriford go Souf — she's dead. An' pretty soon my wife's dead. An' when I go to Boniface Penwin, he say my wife she kill Miss Lucy 'cause Miss Lucy not let her get free. My wife never lef' Miss Lucy all pretty Miss's life, never. When I go to Boniface Penwin, he say, 'You mine now, 'cause you Misses dead.' I show my free papers an' he snatch 'em and tear 'em up an' say I his an' he sell me to New Orleans trader right away. But I run from his place to Atlanta. An' I go to Neil an' tell him. He just come there. Neil goes mad-like for a week, maybe more, an' not know anybody, and I taken care of him. When he gits better all the Penwins is in Kansas. I can't tell 'bout time but it was all las' summer an' fall."

Merriford said slowly. "And you took care of my boy?"

"I don't want to tell no more," the Negro pleaded.

"But you must now, Jupe; it's your only way to git free. All that proves you were set free is gone," Coke Wren put in.

"Neil Merriford never smile no more. He come to Kansas, him an' me. We bound to get Colonel Penwin somehow. Neil never was right in his head after he found out. I could gone to Boston, but I staid with him. I can't say no more."

Jupe tumbled into a limp heap in his chair and stared out of the open door.

"How did you happen to know John Brown, Jupe?" Coke asked.

"Me an' young Mars'r Merriford come into his settlement an' found a place to stay all night. We told him about Penwin. Mars'r Neil did, 'cause he was n't right, an' awful tired. Them Doyles, down on Pottawatomie Creek, chased us with bloodhound, and we got away an' got to Brown's the day before we got — I got — pretty near to Lawrence."

"Well, now, let 's have these Injuns talk a little. Them an' me was real chummy last winter when you left me an' Jupe here to run things," so Coke urged; but the Indians steadfastly refused to talk.

"You talk," at last White Turkey said.

"Will you swear to what I say, or set me right ef I 'm wrong?" Wren asked.

Both nodded, then sat in stolid silence while Wren took up the thread of things.

"It seems, boys, that this Delaware, — who 's the loyalest citizen the Nation 's got outside its pale, — 'cause Elliot's mother took him in out of the wet last spring, is boun' no harm shall ever come to her nor hers, went down on the Trail one stormy night last winter, he did, and took a bullet B. Penwin was aimin' at Elliot Darrow, took it into his own hide to save Mis' Darrow's boy. He 's got the bullet an' knows who shot it at him. Eh, White Turkey?"

"While the winds blow and the Wakarusa runs down to the Kaw, me keep harm from White woman," White Turkey said solemnly.

"Yes," Coke said; "and he got wind of somebody goin' to git caught up with at Hole in the Rock, and he thought it was Lamond and Darrow. He owned that red-roan that 's carried B. Penwin to do his cussed mean-

ness over the country for nearly a year. White Turkey rode after Lamond and Darrow to git there and save 'em. He cut out south in the rough perairie this side that ravine, an' got into it away ahead of 'em."

How clearly Elliot remembered that day when the third horseman on the red-roan had followed the other two, and Craig had insisted that his father rode a bay colt!

"Boys, Neil Merriford and Jupe was in that ravine, and White Turkey tied his horse in a thicket and slipped down into the rocky run to see what was goin' on, for they was high words bein' given. I'll be brief, Winthrop," Coke said sympathetically, for the eyes of the lawyer cut him to the heart. "A pistol shot from Neil sent the bay colt down. I brought you the bullet, you remember. Then they was what none of us can know save them as saw it,—this Red man an' this Black man; but the outcome was that Neil was wounded, an'—an' he was put down into that black pool an' his revolver flung after him. Bear up; be a man, Merriford."

The earth dropped from under Neil Merriford's father then, and he hid his face and said no word.

"Neil was n't tryin' to kill Colonel Penwin. He meant to bring him to justice for Miss Lucy's sake." Wren thought talking better than silence just then. "He could have killed Penwin easy as his horse, but he was n't no murderer."

"Thank heaven," Merriford murmured, and Coke continued:

"Penwin 's a giant in strength, an' he was a maniac in violence that day; he fixed Neil with a bullet first, then he took Jupe. Now comes this man's bondage. If Jupe swears not to tell, he shall be free. If he ever reveals one thing, he 's to fall into Penwin's clutches. The

Colonel could have had it out with Jupe, but he dassent fight, an' Jupe did n't realize his own power proper. So he promised to save his own life and be free. You can't wonder at that, ner blame him, gentlemen. White Turkey was witness to the whole thing, not knowin' whose contention it was contendin'; and before he could git out and not be seen, Boniface Penwin — 'cause the Evil One's in league with him — gits to the thicket, to hide, an' there's a roan horse all ready-made waitin' for him, whom he grabs forthwith, an' is still a-grabbin'.

"My boy! my boy!" moaned the lawyer.

"He would never have been quite right again, Merriford," St. Felix said. "I knew that in Atlanta. His brain was crazed — and no wonder. You cannot wish him back."

"And he's not in that pool, neither; tell 'em that, Pelathe," Wren cried.

The young Shawnee looked up quickly at White Turkey, who nodded assent.

"When the moon was one-quarter big, we go after White Turkey's roan horse down there. We chase pretty white squaw little way till we see better."

Elliot remembered Beth's Indian now.

"We do not find the horse, but we find young white brave on top of water. We leave White Turkey's blanket in little valley where we will make a grave. Then we go wrap my blanket 'round brave and bring him here. White Turkey's blanket is gone. Somebody hide it under rocks by there. So we bury brave all careful. Then we find White Turkey's blanket by chance."

"And you never told," Merriford said.

"We did not know who, at first, and Jupe was afraid for us to say, so we would not tell. Then ——" The Indian's face was shrewd enough.

"If no law protect white men, how shall Red men or Black men be heard in court in these times in Kansas?"

"I understand," Merriford said. "You have all done your best. And this faithful Jupe, you have been true to your word and have done your duty as you saw it. Will you let me be alone now?" He grasped each hand and the men filed out.

"That's my horse," White Turkey said as he passed Merriford.

"Go and take it, White Turkey; I'll defend you in court," the lawyer replied.

The Delaware shot across the street to where the red-roan pawed the ground about a rude hitching-post. In another minute a Delaware war-whoop broke the quiet of Massachusetts Avenue, and Indian and horse were going north with joyous speed.

As the men left the office by the front door Roxbury and Jack Bobbs came into it through the rear door.

"We've been listenin' out there," Roxbury said gruffly as he walked up to the lawyer. "We're a different sort from you, Merriford, but we've got a common cause,— to rid the earth of that cheatin', murderin' Boniface Penwin. He's cheated me out of my own ten times over. I promised Buford I'd keep still till we settled Kansas." He smiled grimly. "Kansas ain't never goin' to be settled by our kind, an' me an' Bobbs goes home soon as we git that viper. So we don't keep our word no longer."

Merriford stood looking at the two men, deliberating before he spoke.

"Roxbury sent me to spy him out last Fall," Jack Bobbs began. "I had a cabin down by Palmyry. Just saved my life by goin' to church with them Darrow boys, for he'd got wind of me bein' there an' come an' hid in

my shack to kill me. I went to church 'stid o' goin' in again."

At that moment Colonel Boniface Penwin came hurriedly into the street, seeking his horse. He stopped and stared at the bit of rein left hanging where White Turkey had cut it in his haste.

Roxbury and Bobbs gave a shout and, with pistols aimed, rushed into the street. Penwin turned at the first shout. Quick as a flash he darted around the corner of the street and into the alley where the Georgians' horses were tethered. Cutting the rein of the stronger one, he mounted and fled, a perfect shower of bullets following him.

Dr. St. Felix and Elliot, standing at the Doctor's office door, saw the whole proceeding.

"The last of him in Kansas, Elliot," the Doctor said. "I wish they had gotten him, for he will rise up to trouble us all again. A Penwin never forgets. Come in, won't you?"

Elliot had been thinking swiftly of the past events. He recalled the night of the storm when Colonel Penwin shrieked in terror at sight of him.

"He thought he had killed me when he shot White Turkey instead of me, and I must have seemed like my own ghost or the ghost of Neil Merriford at the Hole in the Rock. And the night he told me I must not get in Craig's way — I remember how terror-stricken he looked when he happened to glance at that still pool. And he didn't want any more dead faces there to haunt him so I was to be finished in Coleman's Cave. I must have reminded him of Neil. No wonder he hates me."

But now Elliot's mind was full of another thought.

"Dr. St. Felix," the Quaker said frankly: "I think I'd better not go in now, nor any more. If I can make

my plans right, I shall go East to study this fall. I will not be up here any more. I am deeply grateful to you for your help. Tell Rosalind I thank her too."

Dr. St. Felix had taken Elliot's hand, and he held it, while his eyes were on the ground. At length he looked up.

"Elliot, I understand. I saw how matters were tending on the day I stopped at Wren's cabin to send you to Nethercote's. Miss Lamond was quieting the baby unmindful of you. But I understood your face that day. If I saw aright it is best so, better now than later. I had hoped for Rosalind's sake that it might be otherwise, for you are a man of a thousand, my boy,—the soul of honor, a hero in courage, a gentleman in kingly courtesy, and affectionate beyond the disposition of most men. God bless you, Darrow." He wrung the young man's hand and the two separated.

And Elliot, thinking of the Doctor's kind words, so much in contrast to David Lamond's judgment of himself, did not dream how much better it would have been for him in a day to come had one of the Georgians' bullets caught Boniface Penwin then. Before midnight the Colonel was across the border-line into Missouri, and the Kansas Territory never saw him again.

CHAPTER XXIV

WHOSE SOUL GOES MARCHING ON

I cannot remember a night so dark as to have hindered the coming day, nor a storm so furious and dreadful as to prevent the return of the warm sunshine and a cloudless sky.

— John Brown to his Wife and Children.

WITH the passing of Colonel Boniface Penwin from Kansas, Craig came into his own. His father had spoken truly when he said: "You and I will follow different lines of life and thought. I know it as well now as when the fact is old to both of us." Wherever Boniface Penwin may have been during the years before Elliot Darrow met him again, he was not following the same lines of life and thought his son was pursuing in these years, else his action would not have differed so widely from his son's. Dr. St. Felix also spoke truly when he declared, "A Penwin never forgets."

When Craig and Lucy and Tarleton found themselves entirely orphaned, they met the situation philosophically, for the turmoil of the spring and summer that robbed them of their father or filled their home with strange, loud-voiced men had made them welcome a freedom from it all. Irregularly ample sums of money reached them from the South, and their faithful black servant was still their housekeeper. Aunt Crystal's heartstrings were twined round these children whom she had known from babyhood. It took little to make

Lucy and Tarley happy, and their impulsive natures rebounded quickly from the surprise of their father's sudden departure; while Craig devoted himself now to the making of a good citizen. And since the West has ever been magnanimous, caring not much for one's ancestry, if a man acts like a man, Lawrence and the Vinland Valley took the capable young Southerner at his face value.

Craig did profit by his father's advice to win by seeming good will rather than by coercion. He placed no restrictions on Lucy and Tarley in their friendly association with Joe Darrow. Nor did he offer any check to Lucy's growing interest in Mark. Mark was a big, brown-haired, blue-eyed boy now, devoted madly to the cause of John Brown, but in his heart he cherished a fondness for Lucy's bright face and pretty Southern ways and lisping accent. It would have made no difference to him if Craig had objected to him. The boy who had faced the rabid forces at Black Jack and Franklin and Osawatomie was n't likely to be disturbed because a tall, slender young Southerner might object to his presence. Mark thought he owned Kansas, because he had surged among its warring forces with a daring that was sublime.

And as for Lucy, Aunt Crystal had spoken well when she said once:

"'Deed, for a fac', all our Southern 'ristocrats is one thing or t' other. They is either high-stringed, or sweet an' lazy. Mr. Craig, he 's high-stringed; Miss Lucy, she 's sweet an' lazy; and little Mr. Tarleton, he 's bofe, but most like Miss Lucy."

Lucy took to Mark by the magnetism of the attraction of opposites. And Craig, whose acts were prompted always by purely personal motives and never by the mo-

tives of general welfare, found it convenient to let his sister have her own way.

In October, Elliot was to go East to enter the Quaker College of Haverford, near Philadelphia. After David Lamond's return from Lecompton, he had waited with all a young lover's eagerness to know the result of his conference with his daughter. But Beth avoided meeting him, and gave him no opportunity to guess, save by lack of opportunity, what the result of this interview had been. At least it seemed to Elliot that she avoided him. And he knew, for love is alert, how often Craig visited the Lamonds, and he could guess by Craig's growing popularity elsewhere how welcome he must be in this home. Once, indeed, Elliot had met Beth with her father on the Trail by the Hole in the Rock, but the Scotchman had passed him so swiftly there was not a moment for Elliot to read a "message in beautiful gray eyes," if there had been one for him to read. Elliot's eyes were keen, however. There was a fold of lace about Beth's neck with a little V-shaped opening at the front. Across this bit of white throat, he caught the gleam of a tiny gold chain. And even Mark noted how bright his brother's eyes were when he came in to supper that night.

But now October had come. Elliot was to start East soon for a two years' stay, and he determined to make opportunity for himself. He was to leave Kansas on Monday. On Saturday night he came to the stone cabin and asked for an interview with David Lamond.

The result of the conference could have been guessed by the appearance of either one when they separated. David Lamond sat upright in his arm-chair looking straight before him at nothing. A tear was on his cheek and his hands were clinched. The tear had come

after Elliot had left. The father heart was striving with the stern Scotch spirit to call him back.

"He 'd win a saint to fall from grace with that handsome face and that smile, and he is as gentle and yet as unbreakable as that royal father of his. If he lived anywhere but in the West, he would probably be all right. But I 'm afraid of the test. A Scotch Presbyterian will fight for what is right. A Quaker will only turn the other cheek. And then the boy does n't explain why he went wrong in the sacking of Lawrence. He shall not be a son-in-law to me."

Elliot's face had no smile, and the little hint of sadness it wore without — it was more than a hint as he walked away from the Lamond cabin that night. But his step was firm and his head erect.

"Two years! A man can't go without food that long and live," he said to himself. "I 'm glad I did n't promise not to speak to her without his permission. I 'm not going out of Kansas until I talk with Beth if it takes me two years. I 've behaved myself and waited since May. Does he think that did n't take any courage? But if Beth agrees with her father; if I stand in Craig Penwin's way, as he says I do, and she wants me to step aside, I 'll do it then — no sooner. 'Until you can prove to me that you are not the coward I think you are' — that 's what he said. He 'll tell me when he finds it out. I won't ask him."

He turned to look back at the stone cabin faintly outlined in the shadows.

"A Scotchman's strength and a Quaker's patience," he murmured. "Maybe there 's something in a Scotch lass's strength also." And the smile that lighted his face then showed that the man had conquered himself and was daring the future.

There was another element beside strength and patience ready to leap into the game, an element not yet reckoned with, and that was Yankee ingenuity.

Set now in his determination, Lamond that night had said to his daughter:

"Beth, whatever you and Elliot Darrow may have thought of the future, I have forbidden him to consider you any further; and you, for your own welfare, must obey my wishes. You will thank me for that some day."

Beth, with an impenetrable expression in her gray eyes, said nothing. But Lamond's word had been law in that household hitherto. He did not think of any change now.

The October Sabbath came, beautiful as a dream of Paradise. Opalescent skies overhung a land all gray-green and amber, with purple and scarlet in the hollows, and topaz and mother-of-pearl on the crest of the prairie billows; and, folded round all, soft-clinging, exquisite, an amethyst veil swathing the horizon, where opal blended toward amber. And then it was the Sabbath day, the last one Elliot was to see in Kansas for two years. He was young and strong, and he was in love with all a young man's strength for loving. He had planned to storm the Lamond castle in the evening. The same October moon that had beautified the night a year ago, when love's first kiss was given, without permission, would be pouring out its glory on a glorious land to-night. The air was delicious, and to-morrow was to be the day of good-bys. He would see Beth tonight.

Patty Wren had sent Coke over to ask for Beth to come and spend the afternoon and take supper with them. Coke looked innocently neighborly, as he said:

"Me an' Patty 'll bring her home 'bout seven or eight, Mis' Lamond."

"Oh, no hurry," Beth's father said. "If she is good company for you, keep her till you get ready to bring her back."

David Lamond was as shrewd as he was unyielding. And he smiled behind his yellow beard, for he had a notion of what the Quaker would attempt to do on this evening.

The third Wren's nest was on the site of the second one, built with a better chimney this time. Ten minutes after Coke reached home with Beth he came limping into the house with a twisted ankle.

Coke's reputation for accidents was established in the Vinland Valley. Late in this afternoon, when Tarley Penwin, who happened by, brought word to Darrow's that Patty wanted Elliot to come and do the chores and tell Cokey good-bye, because he'd slipped on a sliding rock in the ravine, the message met prompt response. Elliot hurried away determined to make two calls before he returned.

"Good-bye, mother," he said, as he kissed his mother; "there'll be more than an ankle untwisted maybe before I get back."

"So it's not your head unscrewed from your spinal colyum, Ellie, we'll be glad," Mark shouted after his brother.

Coke, with a bandaged ankle, sat in the doorway as serious as a judge, while Elliot did the chores for the evening.

Patty insisted on his staying for supper, and Elliot washed his hands in the basin outside the back door, and came smiling in, putting on his coat as he came. Beth was sitting in a low chair, as he had seen her on the day he left her to go to the rescue of Mrs. Nethercote. Elliot caught his breath, and his face was colorless for

a moment. Then the blood surged up into his cheeks and his own eyes were illumined, for he had read the message for him in the gray eyes of Beth Lamond.

Patty and Coke chirped and twittered about, busy at nothing, and the plain little meal was a banquet to all of them.

"I promised Mis' Lamond we'd git Beth home by seven or eight to-night," Coke said, "but her pa, he said they was n't no hurry. Now, Elliot, I'm bound to ask you to do it for us. I can't go, and I'm not really in shape to have Patty leavin' me."

"Oh, I'll accommodate you," Elliot said, gaily. "I'm always willing to help a neighbor out of trouble when I can."

"I'd better shut the door so's you won't take cold, Cokey," Patty said, in an unnecessarily loud voice, after the good-bys were said.

Something hit her shoulder as she turned from the door. It was the bandage from Coke's ankle, and Coke himself was standing on his head beside the hearth. Then they joined hands and executed a little bird waltz about the room.

"When I git that queer feelin', top of my head, I know somethin' good's goin' to happen 'fore night," Patty said, "an' I waked up with it this mornin'."

"When I git a sprained ankle that gits well in two seconds, it's always a sign of good luck," Coke declared, and then the two sat down and gossiped to their hearts' content.

The gracious day slipped through a purple twilight into a moonlit evening.

> There are nights so enchanting, they seem to restore
> The original beauty of Eden; so tender,
> They woo every soul to a willing surrender

Of feverish longing; so holy, withal,
That a broad benediction seems sweetly to fall
On the world.

Such was the October night in the Vinland Valley into which Beth Lamond and Elliot Darrow walked together. They had not spoken to each other, save with their eyes maybe, since the May afternoon at Mrs. Elbert's cabin, and at first a strange restraint fell on them. But the witchery of the twilight haze, and the splendor of the grand old moon God meant for lovers if their loves be holy, soon had them in the evening's spell, and all the way was a dream of joy. It was twilight still when they came to the Hole in the Rock. The waters were placid and every graceful vine about the dark ledges swung in artistic drapery over the serenity below. The place was picturesquely weird, and to the innocent girl and the man of clean hands and a pure heart it was full of fantastic charm. But Beth came closer to Elliot's side as the shadows deepened, and he drew her hand through his arm and held it there.

They reached the edge of the bluff above the Vinland Valley just as the full moon swung over the eastern horizon, and they sat down on the old seat of the October before, and were silent.

"I start for Philadelphia tomorrow, Beth," Elliot said, at last.

Beth was leaning forward looking out at the beautiful valley. Even in the moonlight her hair was richly golden, and her eyes were very dark in the soft white beams.

"I went to see your father last night. You probably know what he said to me at least he promised me that he would inform you. I could not leave without seeing you, and I should have stormed the stone house

tonight if Coke had n't sprained his accommodating ankle. 'Cokey' is a jewel."

Then they were silent, for a silvery light was filling the valley and they wanted to keep the picture of it. At length Beth turned, and the radiance glorified her face for Elliot Darrow as it was glorifying the valley for both of them.

"How long will a Quaker's patience last?" she asked, softly.

"So long as a Scotch lassie's strength will endure," he murmured, and he put his arms about her, and drew her close to him, for she was his to love, and some day to claim for his own to keep.

"I'm glad you wore this dress, Beth; I love the Lamond plaid," Elliot said.

She had on a soft cashmere, with the clan tones running through it. The gold chain was about her neck, and the dainty curve of the pink cheek above it was bewitching.

"I shall be away two years. I'll go to my cousins, the Osbornes of Boston, in vacation. But I'm coming home two June-times away."

Beth looked up at Elliot with a thrill of joy in the possession of such a love as his, and they pledged their faith again in the sweet Kansas moonlight of that October evening.

Elliot told Beth good-bye on the stone steps, beside the vine-covered pillars where he had first found his heart-hunger that only she could satisfy, and this time the golden head nestled against his shoulder for a glad long minute, and no shadows darkened the gentle moonbeams falling about them.

At the open door he stopped, while Beth's mother lighted the candles in the living room, that David La-

mond might know he had brought Beth home, and with a courteous greeting he bade both the father and mother good-bye. As he walked down the Trail in the moonlight, the same thought came to both parents — the thought that whatever might be their judgment of his character, Nature had done much for the young Quaker.

Two years pass quickly enough to a middle-aged Congressman, uncertain of reëlection. To two young Kansas pioneers the time was long but not unhappy. When Elliot came home for his first vacation, he was tall, broad-shouldered, and muscular. He had a student's clear complexion, and soft, white hands; his clothing was well-fitted, and his manners had more of polish, but he carried a boy's face and a boy's light heart. He had added vocal music to his accomplishments, with training, and his rich voice was fuller and sweeter in its scope and power.

The Lawrence girls fulfilled Mrs. Elbert's expectation and "went crazy" over him, to her great enjoyment. Popularity came easily to him, the best homes welcomed him, and the charming social leaders made clear their preference for his company. But the light of his dark eyes deepened and burned for only one, and Beth's cup of joy was full. For although the father had not varied a line from his stern decree, the two were young, and the Scotch endurance and the Quaker patience broke not at all.

A brief, busy summer passed, and Elliot was away again for his last two years of college.

Meanwhile Craig Penwin fought stubbornly for his claim, and he knew how to fight. He never staid a minute too long, nor put Beth on the defensive. Slowly but persistently he pursued his life aim, favored by the Scotchman, and accepted by everybody else as the finest

young fellow in the Territory, and just a match for Elizabeth Lamond. It came to be accepted at last that the thing was established, because it should be so.

Beth had abundantly fulfilled Colonel Penwin's prophecy that she would be called the beauty of Kansas, and back of golden hair, and cheeks abloom with the tint of the wild rose, was the splendid young womanhood of strength and beauty.

The border strife waxed and waned and flamed forth again with deadly fierceness, for the struggle that was to become of nation-wide virulence was always at high tide on the frontier. And if squatter sovereignty gave Kansas Territory to the Free-State party in numbers, the claim was maintained by violence alone.

Meanwhile little Territorial towns were springing up or fading away in the chance fortunes of the day. Beyond Palmyra, a school for higher learning — the Baker University, of a prosperous later history — took root in the unfriendly soil. Lucy and Tarley Penwin and Mark and Joe Darrow were among its earliest students. For Mark and Lucy these days of schooling were a God-send, tying their young minds back to the culture the harsh frontier had withheld. Lucy, "sweet and lazy," as Aunt Crystal had declared, needed the spur to her natural gift of intelligence; and for Mark, it curbed the lure of the raiding spirit, growing on both sides of the border. The West owes much to the silent, certain influences of her early schools, making men, instead of highwaymen, out of her vigorous boys.

Mark's hero had left the regions round the Vinland Valley now, but the name of John Brown was heard from ocean to ocean. There must have been magic in it, for never by chance does a name become fixed in history and immortalized by the ages. He did not seek

notoriety. He wanted no official rank nor honor of leadership. He was not an organizer of federations. His acts were circumscribed by his clear sense of his own duty to humanity. The cost of it to him or to anybody else he left with the Power that put this duty before him. His methods will be forgotten, as are forgotten long since the methods of Alexander, and Caesar, and Charlemagne, and William the Silent, and Cromwell, and Henry of Navarre.

Time ran on to the November of 1859. John Brown, for the tragedy of Harper's Ferry, was in the Jefferson County jail in Virginia, awaiting his execution. He was old and sick and wounded, but he was loaded with fetters and chained to the floor of his cell and guarded night and day — so great was the fear of the great man in the minds of little men!

In Kansas no rain had fallen for months, except a few tantalizing drops that sizzled and left scarcely a pellet of mud on the parched ground. The Vinland Valley was a barren waste, save for the little growths that had struggled through the season in the most sheltered nooks of the ravines. The terrible drouth that fell upon the West from the midsummer of 1859 until November of 1860 seemed the final test of the freedom-loving pioneers. For now the land they had bought with brain and brawn and martyr blood was burned by the vengeance of Nature, turned ruffian. Let him who doubts the heroism of an enduring people read the history of that time of peril and power.

On a November day, Winthrop Merriford and John Speer had come to the Vinland Valley and were in counsel at the Darrow home. David Lamond and Coke Wren, with other settlers, were in the company. The day was warm for November, and the men were grouped

about the open door among the cedars, with Isabel Darrow and Patty Wren and Mrs. Lamond listening from the doorstep.

"What is to be the end?" Merriford asked. His eyes were gazing westward toward the ridge beyond which was the grave of his lost son, Neil.

"For John Brown, the gallows in December," John Speer replied.

"For the Valley here, the blessed miracle of the rain, and a land of plenty when the Good Bein' sees fit. I want to know now, if them Israelites meandered forty year waitin' for water in the desert, we can wait some, too. We've got more grit inside us an' less sand outside us, I reckon," Coke Wren averred. "An' Noah kicked some considerable, and went and got beastly drunk and disorderly afterward, 'cause he had to put up with forty days of water. I reckon that old ark was a caution to snakes when she hit Mount Ararat. Gimme Mount Oread an' a general Kansas drouth, gentlemen, an' keep your Ararat an' floods."

"Coke's a comfort, anyhow," Merriford said, with a smile. "But what is before us and the Nation?"

"For Kansas, admission as a Free-State finally. We must win to victory at last," Hiram Darrow said, with a voice of assurance.

"But for the Nation, civil war." David Lamond's face was full of a stern courage. "There is no other end to conflicts such as we have known for these five years here in Kansas. It will come, and it must come soon."

"I'm ready for it," one after another of the men declared.

"But is this all?" Merriford asked.

Then Isabel Darrow spoke. It was from his mother

that Elliot had inherited his rich, deep voice. Her tone was ever gentle, but firm and full of power.

"No, friends, this is not all. Beyond these ends you predict so surely, there lies the greatest purpose of all — the purpose for which John Brown is to executed next month — the enfranchisement of slavery; that is the future of our Nation. Never again will the westward-moving frontier, under the American flag, see a border strife such as this Kansas warfare has been. There will be crime, and injustice, and bloodshed before the West is reclaimed. But never again can brutality, and treason, and atrocity reach this flood-tide of misrule and misery and martyrdom; for that which has put the spur and power into it is human slavery, and that must perish."

The Quaker woman's face was exquisite in its sweet, womanly beauty and intellectual power. And every man in that company listened with reverence to her earnest declaration, as she added:

"The rope that hangs John Brown should be a strong one. For when the South destroys that stern old chieftain of freedom, it will destroy at the same time its cherished institution for which he perishes, and John Brown and human slavery will swing to their death from the same gibbet."

"Amen!" came the fervent response from the company. And then the talk became general.

"Mis' Darrow, where's Elliot now — finishing his college to Haverford?" Patty asked.

David Lamond listened for the answer.

"No; he's at Boston now with our relatives. The drouth cut him out of this year of schooling. He will not finish until '61," Mrs. Darrow explained.

"The Osbornes are delighted with him, too, Mrs. Darrow," Winthrop Merriford said. "He's pretty busy,

reading medicine and working hard, they write me. Also they say he is very popular with everybody, and especially the young folks. Elliot is a charming fellow. No wonder the young ladies admire him."

Long ago Isabel Darrow had foreseen this hour. A man of magnetic personal power whom men would admire, and women would love, beyond the prejudice of mother-pride her intelligence told her this would be the heritage of her son.

Lamond pictured his own Elliot Darrow there, popular, of course, but lacking still the stern strength he wanted in a son-in-law.

A month later, old John Brown, who had fought the good fight, and kept the faith, finished his course.

When the April of '61 came, with its spring-time beauty, to the Kansas prairies, the Civil War had come, and Kansas, so much the immediate cause, was still in the path of the tornado. Up from her prairies and valleys, again the loyal-hearted men came hurrying, to build now a wall of defence for the Nation and to keep from stain and dishonor the flag of their country.

Hiram Darrow, true to his Quaker principles, steadfastly refused to take up arms; and the heroism it cost him to hold to his beliefs was akin to that which staid John Brown on the day of his great promotion. But Darrow held firm.

Craig Penwin sought out David Lamond with a loyalty that overjoyed the Scotchman.

"You, a Southerner, by inheritance and training, a believer in slavery, yet you want to enlist for the Union?" he exclaimed.

"Why not?" asked Craig. "It is my flag and my Government. I'm a citizen of the United States, not of the South nor of the North."

Lamond grasped his hand and wrung it eagerly.

"Craig Penwin, I am not blind. I have watched your patient devotion to my daughter. She is hardly yet old enough for the responsibility of a home, but, my boy, she is yours, if you will it so."

"And she wills it, too," Craig added, but his heart was burning. "Shall we settle this before we leave for the front?"

"I am ready to give my blessing to-day, and Craig, it *shall be* as I wish."

Craig understood, and the triumph of having overcome a worthy, powerful rival was mixed with the joy of that hour.

And Beth? With a daughter's love and sorrow, and dread of war for her father, would the Scotch strength measure up to the Quaker patience now? Beth had never seemed so beautiful to her father before. Willingly now, he could give her up to the fine young Southerner, and he smiled on her, and told her of his pride and his love.

In the evening Beth sat on the steps by the vine-clad pillars of the porch. The stone cabin, like the "Darrarat" and many more of the settlers' homes round about, had given place to a larger structure. Nearly all the farmhouses of the Vinland Valley showed marks of comfort. But Beth had pleaded for the little stone-floored porch and rough pillars, when the cabin became a prettier dwelling.

The evening was balmy. The tender young leaves were just unfolding on the vines and there was a shimmer of green on the woodland. The stars would be out soon, and the twilight was deepening. Beth wondered if Elliot, so far away to-night, might be looking up at the same stars, and remembering her. Or was

he forgetting his Kansas sweetheart with all that Boston had to offer. And now she was face to face with her own battle, for her father's purpose was clear to her.

Some one was striding across the prairie instead of following the main Trail. The shadows were shot through with the after-sunset light, and in their glow Beth saw Elliot Darrow walking up the path with a swift-springing step. It had been long since she had seen him, but all the lonely longing of the time was lost in that one glad moment. Elliot Darrow, the same, only more manly, it seemed to the Scotch lassie. Beth Lamond, only more beautiful to the Quaker, and he clasped both of her hands and bent to read the message of gray eyes.

"I have my locket yet," he murmured.

"And I have my chain," she answered, softly, and then she added:

"When did you come home, and why? All the men here except your father are going to enlist soon. That's all we think of in Kansas."

"I came home three hours ago. I'm going to stay three weeks. I would have enlisted in a Massachusetts regiment, but I wanted to go out from Kansas. Here's where I belong, and I wanted to see you again, for war is an uncertain proposition — to cowards."

"You, Elliot Darrow? Are you going to fight for the Union? I thought you wouldn't do it. What has changed you?" And Beth Lamond's face was bright with joy and wonder.

"You interrogation point! Yes, I'm going to fight for the Union. My mind changed the day when Jones's men burned Lawrence and I watched that red rag wave over the Eldridge House, where the Star Spangled Banner should have been. I'd like to be a color-bearer and

wave the flag of the Union above all the banners set up against it. And as to what your father may say, I'm not enlisting for him, but for the Nation. But would it help the cause of our union, Beth, if I spoke to him again? Has he changed any toward me?"

Beth shook her head sadly. "No, Elliot. He would n't believe you were sincere."

"When the war is over, if my life is spared, I'm coming back to Kansas; and then, if there is a civil war, or only a border struggle in the Valley, I'm going to claim my own." He held her hand in his close grasp. "After I serve my country, I shall not wait for anybody's mind to change, except yours, dearie."

"When you come home again, Elliot——" She hesitated.

"Shall I bring a Boston girl for my bride?"

"Oh, no, no." And Beth clung to his arm.

"Come to Kansas when you want——"

"You?"

"Yes, Elliot."

"Then we are all right. Now let's go in. I have hardly seen mother yet. I must run back home, and I'm not going without speaking to your father and mother. I'm not that kind of a coward."

And certainly he was not. David Lamond chafed under a restraint he could not break when the young Quaker was present. It was not so before those college years. Now the boy, all boyish still, and young, and courteous, put up a defence Lamond chose not to meet with violence yet. But it changed not the final stern decree in the older mind.

June-time brought the enlistment of soldiers, and July saw the Kansas men taking the field. In the brief space before their going away Elliot saw Beth every

day, and the joy of that sweet summer-time came back to him in many a lonely vigil on the tented field. And amid the roar of cannon, when dangers crowded, and death hovered near, the message of beautiful gray eyes, with the Madonna face of a Quaker mother, made the service for his country a service of joy. When their last good-byes were said, Beth slipped a silken handkerchief into Elliot's hand.

"It has my colors, the Lamond plaid. Keep it close to the red, white and blue," she said.

All the while Craig bided his time in sullen anger, and when the opportunity came, he demanded his own of David Lamond.

"We must wait a little longer, my boy," the father said. "We have a bigger service now before us. The reward is home and happiness for both of us. I have promised you that. When the time is ripe, I'll settle the matter. The boy is fickle as well as weak. You notice how popular he is, and attractive to most people."

Craig had noticed this carefully.

"He'll change himself, and, at the last, Beth would not disobey me when she knows I am choosing for her own happiness. But we must not be too rash right now."

Craig was forced to submit.

When Craig went to the war, he brought Lucy and Tarley, with Aunt Crystal, up to Lawrence. Dr. St. Felix had not entered the ranks of either side yet, and Craig put his brother and sister under the doctor's protection. Lucy was a young lady now, impulsive like her father, but kindly natured, with pretty manners and a soft Southern voice. Mark was still devoted to her, and she led him a merry chase which Mark really enjoyed. Strangely enough, he was not as eager to join the army as he had been to join John Brown: partly be-

cause he had had a taste of war already, in the most unjust and irregular form; partly because he was impulsive and changeable in his moods; but mostly because his mother felt in those first years that one son was sufficient sacrifice for a home to offer.

Craig's last interview with Beth was pathetic for him. The two had been much together, and Craig was wonderfully companionable when he chose to be. A sort of friendship freedom had come with the association because Craig would not put Beth to the test of refusing him any attention. His wooing was of the kind that fills a life so full of necessary pleasure that the days grow barren without it. Beth was surprised to find how grieved she felt at the parting. And Craig, to whom the girl meant the best that life can offer, could not keep the sorrow of separation from showing in his face.

"That's a pretty chain you wear," he said, as he lingered over his good-bye. There was a tender light in his deep blue eyes, and all that was best in him was pleading there.

"I like it," Beth replied, while a little deeper bloom touched her fair cheek.

"Would you let me take it for a keepsake?" Craig asked. "I'll give it back to you when I come home."

"It isn't mine to give," she said.

"Oh, an heirloom, dear to the family. I can understand. It is very dainty, and of an unusual pattern. I just wanted a keepsake from you." Craig's tone said more than his words.

"Then I'll give you a golden chain of good will," Beth said, frankly. "That's a great deal to give," she added, and there was a twinkle in her gray eyes, "for you needn't ever lose it if you are real good."

Her good-bye was too sincerely and frankly regretful

for Craig to misunderstand her, but he cherished his hope still, because he willed his future doggedly, and life without her now he refused to consider.

"She would care for me at last if that good-looking Quaker was out of the way," he said to himself, "and he must get out soon. My father was right about him. He is a power that I must overcome, and I shall not stop to consider the means. But he may change his mind, or maybe ——"

Craig's thin lips closed with a sharp line across his glistening teeth. If some half-formed evil wish came to him as he thought of the fortunes of war, it was because of his passion for a girl whom he esteemed for her strength of character as much as he loved her for herself. In his secret heart he knew that if King David needed any help in getting Uriah to the front in this Civil War, it would not be for lack of Craig Penwin's assistance.

With the beginning of the war, money for the Penwins ceased to come from the South, and Lucy and Tarley found themselves without support. Then the two members of the family who were "sweet and lazy," as Aunt Crystal had declared, proved their independence of their "high-stringed" relatives.

"Papa's in the Rebel army and Craig's in the Union army," Lucy said to Mark. "Tarley and I must do for ourselves now."

Their brief schooling in the little college beyond Palmyra helped them much. By tutoring, and the making of pretty laces and fine sewing, Lucy joined finances with Tarley's funds from any work a boy could secure. So these two, bred in the luxury of the South, came soon to compass their own support in the independent West.

By midsummer the Kansas soldiers were far afield and in the mutations of chance the two young men from the Vinland Valley found themselves in the same company. Their captain first, and later their colonel, was David Lamond.

With the second Bull Run, Dr. St. Felix went East to join the Confederacy. When Fort Donaldson fell, Mark entered the Union army and went down the Mississippi River with General Grant through Corinth and Shiloh. Then he swung into Arkansas and the Southwest, and the Vinland Valley saw him only once again until after the martyrdom of Abraham Lincoln.

His battlefield was in the lines of perpetual peril, and no danger was so threatening, no chance so daring, no risk so tremendous, that it could hold the Quaker boy back from its challenge. He seemed to bear a charmed life, for in all the deadly way no bullet nor bayonet ever reached him, and his comrades still relate the tale of his reckless bravery. No wonder his hair was white at forty-five! It was turning to gray when he came back to the Vinland Valley.

But all Mark's service grew from the inspiration that John Brown put into his boy-soul. He fought not against the South's principle of states rights, but for his own notion of human rights.

On the western frontier the war was least dignified, least effective, and most vengeful—a continuing of the old border struggle of ambush and assassination. Kansas, lying between the South and the North, with the rebellious Confederacy on the east and the menace of hostile Indians on the west, became a storm center for terrific forces outside the swing of military justice and recognized laws of warfare. The struggle here was a vendetta strife where quarter was neither asked nor

given. But the fighting strength of Kansas was under enlistment in the armies of the North. The men who, against bullet, sword, and fire-brand, had stood solidly for the freedom of Kansas were offering their lives now for the larger freedom, whose symbol is the Stars and Stripes. And while John Brown's body lay mouldering in the tomb, in these men — loyal to his life purpose — his soul went marching on.

CHAPTER XXV

THE DAWN OF DOOM

Despots atop, a wild clan below,
Such is the Gaul from long ago.
—James Russell Lowell.

FOR two years the vendetta warfare harassed the border. Kansas outlaws, true to no flag, raided across the eastern boundary. Missouri guerrillas, more dangerous to their own state than the Kansas invaders were, scourged both sides of the line, leaving a trail of blood and ashes in their wake. Among the Kansas outlaws the names of leaders and followers are alike lost in oblivion. Either they repudiated their outlaw course and became respectable citizens, or they dropped out of sight entirely. From these guerrilla bands sprang many infamous highwaymen of later years whose names clogged the criminal records. Their leader, William Clarke Quantrill, became at once the Cain and Judas of the West.

It was the Summer of 1863.

In the annals of our Nation the Summer of 1863 is without a parallel. When the battle of Gettysburg shook the world with its tremendous explosion of human passions, and civil war hung like a millstone on the Nation's neck, even the beardless boys of Kansas shouldered their guns and marched away to fill up the ranks under the starry flag of the Union. The state became

then more than ever a prey to the guerrilla bands who plundered and slaughtered with the old-time form of the border ruffian.

In victory or defeat war breaks the mothers' hearts. Isabel Darrow's dark hair had silvery threads in its silken waves, and lines of sorrow were on her fair face.

The early August days had come and the summer harvests were garnered. Hiram and Isabel sat in the shade of the cedars looking down the westward line of the old Trail.

"We have only one boy left," Isabel said to her husband, as the two watched Joe Darrow and Tarley Penwin riding away toward Lawrence. "Will the war last long enough to take him, too?"

"Let us hope not," Hiram answered, guardedly. "Joe is only seventeen. The war cannot last until he is twenty-one. What chums he and Tarleton have always been!"

"Yes," his wife murmured. "And Elliot and Craig are in the East in the same company under Colonel Lamond now, and Mark's heart has been set on Lucy all these years."

Hiram Darrow smiled. "They are oddly matched," he said.

"And the strangest thing of it all is that the father of these companions of our boys tried once to take the life of one of them. What a sad and tragic career Penwin led!" he added.

"And may be leading still," Isabel suggested, "but we will not blame the children. When Craig was here on his furlough, he told Mrs. Lamond that the Colonel was in the Rebel army. But the boy is loyal to the Union."

"I did not see much of Craig," her husband said.

"He was at Lamond's a great deal, which is but natural, of course."

"Of course," Mrs. Darrow responded, and neither spoke of what both were thinking.

Isabel had given Elliot the little gold chain and she knew it stood for a pledge between Beth and her son. Craig had been at home on a five days' furlough in May, and most of his time had been given to the Lamonds, for he carried many messages from his colonel.

One message intrusted to Craig, however, he never delivered. It said—for David Lamond was the soul of honor—that the young color-bearer of the regiment, Elliot Darrow, had not yet failed to do a soldier's part—not yet.

When Joe and Tarley passed into the woodland on the Trail, the Quaker turned toward his wife.

"Isabel, thee has been a brave woman to give up two boys, but thee will be braver still. Joe and Tarley are going to Lawrence to enlist. There is a camp of a dozen boys there already and by the end of the week there will be eighteen or twenty of them. They are not supplied with arms yet, but they go into training to-morrow."

Isabel looked at her husband with that courage only women possess.

"Each year takes one," she said, slowly. "The tax is heavy on our homes and hearts."

"It is a crime that only the light of future history can prove," Hiram said, sadly. "I have had to pay the price in ridicule and censure and insult because I read too literally the gentle order, 'Love your enemies,' because to me war is murder. And yet I have tried to serve my State."

Isabel looked at her husband's scholarly face where

kindness and firmness were written, and she could understand why her boys were good soldiers.

"Hiram, thy service will match the soldiers' struggles," she said, gently. "Not all the real defenders of a State are on its battlefields. Wars must end, but down all the future years will the battle with ignorance be waged. Think of the power of John Speer and his class of men with their independent printing-presses. They are defending Kansas, no less than Lane and Plumb and Moonlight and all the soldier heroes whose names must be immortal."

"I have no printing-press, Isabel," Darrow said, with a smile.

"But thy power is measureless," his wife insisted. "From the beginning it has been the greater part to build up schools; to match the spelling-book against the shotgun; the rules of grammar against the rules of military strategy; the college dome against battlemented fortress. In Gettysburg great generals overcame great generals in a noble cause. But the cost, oh, Hiram Darrow, the cost of conquest in that victory!"

"Its value history alone must judge, dearie. We can read our own duty only by the light given to us," Hiram said.

"And by that light," Isabel responded, "I see thy power increase. In the legislature last Winter, it was for thee and citizen-soldiers like thyself to win for Kansas her great schools for higher learning. When the University thy influence helped most to create shall stand some day upon Mount Oread, Lawrence, over which it keeps guard, will not be an altar for blood offerings; and border wars will exist only in the memories of a cruel age. For the bloodless victories of higher learning will win the land to fruitfulness and beauty.

Whoever wears the honors of war, the honors of peace must come to men like thee."

So these two, seeing far into the future, sat in the August evening in the home the war was leaving childless now and talked of the larger views of life. And by such as these two does a state grow to Empire.

In the shadows of the same August night, in the Missouri woods, a guerrilla band of three hundred men was gathered. The night was hot, and in the woodland, intensely dark, little fire smudges here and there about the camp drove off the mosquitoes, and dimly revealed the faces and forms of men whom darkness flattered more than daylight did. Heavy, rough, reckless men they were, and as they sprawled about in the shadows, or crouched in the faint gloom, there was about them a suggestion of the jungle beast, mingled with fatal human cunning. Their dress was of the frontier type, with heavy boots outside of coarse pantaloons; their hats, flung slouchily at their heads, were of soft felt, with brims flared up defiantly in front, or rolling above the ear. They were decked with quill or plume, or squirrel's tail, or maybe some bit of tawdry jewelry, or whisky or tobacco label.

But the badge of this order was the overshirt which each man wore. This garment was made of durable stuff, cut low in front, with a slit on the bosom, finished with a rosette or bit of ruffling. The slit with the four pockets and sometimes the tail was faced with a bright fabric. These shirts varied in color from brightest red to dun and gray, and the fine needlework the daylight would show on some of them told that some woman's hand had made it. Their fire-arms were light but dangerous, mostly the Colt's Navy revolver, and each man

of the three hundred wore two of them at least, while many had four, or even six. Men do not carry weapons they cannot use expertly. The six-gunned men must have been ferocious creatures, for all of the guerrilla bands were dead-shots, and when a man can take a score of human lives in five minutes, he must have the ferocity that would shame the jungle tiger.

The leader of this company sat facing the group gathered irregularly about him. He was a slender man, tanned and unshaven, but beardless, and he bore all the rough marks of woods life about him. In the uncertain smudgy light his face was not easily seen, and the less of light it had the better for it. Roman nose, pale complexion, reddish hair, sensual lips, shut with cruel looseness; expressionless countenance, and inhuman eyes of uncertain shallow blue, save when the tiger in him stirred; then they were green, toning to yellow, with heavy upper lids dropping strangely over them like a curtain that was dropped between himself and human mercy — such was William Clarke Quantrill on this August night in his guerrilla camp in the Missouri woods. But the name can be set only in letters of gore, for no other American citizen ever took so many human lives in wanton murder as this guerrilla chieftain and outlaw monster who harassed the Kansas border fifty years ago.

The men about him were the border forces under their captains who had met here in council for the accomplishment of a common purpose. That purpose their chief had stated months before to the Confederate leaders in Virginia:

Kansas should be laid waste at once.

With this purpose Virginia had no concern. It was a Western ruffian's idea, and border warfare differed

mightily from the skill and judgment displayed by the West Point men who commanded the able armies of the Southern Confederacy. With such as Quantrill, Lee and Jackson had no more fellowship than Grant and Sheridan could have had.

But to these bands of men in the dark woods' shadows the demand *"Kansas must be laid waste"* made a different appeal, and here Quantrill's genius found clay for his potter's wheel. They gathered about their leader in the hot black shadows, eager for any work of his planning. The heavy eyelids were drooping low over the yellow-green eyes, the sensual lips were parted like a cat's for snarling, as Quantrill spoke:

"Kansas must be laid waste. Lawrence is the hot-bed of Abolition. We can get more money and more revenge there than anywhere else in the State."

"But the risk is too great," a guerrilla leader declared. "Think of the distance, and the danger."

"I know the hazard of the enterprise," Captain Quantrill exclaimed, "but if you never risk, you never have."

"The captain's right. Yes, he's right," came voices from the darkness round about. "What's the chance? Tell us how. We're ready."

"I'll tell you what's the chance," Quantrill replied. "I've had a man in Lawrence for a week. He's found out all we want to know. I've just got back from Eudora myself and I know all the roads up there. So between us we have the situation clear."

"Where's your man? Let him speak," came the call.

Out of the shadows a guerrilla stepped into the dim light where his chieftain sat. A huge fellow he was, with a face insensible to pity. His soft round hat, with rolled-up brim, was adorned with a plume strangely like human hair, and he carried six revolvers.

"I've been in Lawrence a week — as a speculator — stoppin' at the Eldridge House. The town's just ripe for pickin'. There's no garrison there except about a dozen men north of the river. The guns are all locked in the armory. They make fun of any suggestion of a raid, they're so damned sure there's no danger. They could n't put up any defence. The streets are broad and easy for horsemen to charge in. It's time to strike right now."

"You have heard the report." Quantrill's deep voice broke the silence following the scout's words. "But let me say further, the march is long: soldiers behind us, soldiers before us; we must advance and retreat through soldiers. Come, speak out, now!"

And the captains spoke:

"Lawrence or hell, provided we kill every male thing."

"Lawrence is Jim Lane's home, yes."

"It's a Boston colony, yes."

"Lawrence and the torch."

"Count me in whenever there's killing."

So for revenge and money, in the gloom of the night, the council laid its scheme. Over against a peaceful, helpless city was written the word "Doom." Long lists of names were set in order; every man and boy in Lawrence — save a chosen few — was marked for slaughter; all personal grudges were to be fully glutted; all pillage sanctioned; and not a building was to escape the torch. One reservation only the chivalrous, sensual chieftain demanded: women and children must be spared all indignity. And Quantrill's demands meant obedience. He would shoot his best friend as coolly as his worst enemy, if, indeed, any man could claim to be his best friend — that was what the yellow-green tiger eyes under the heavy eyelid curtains meant. And this was

the monster who in the August of 1863 was to lead in a terrific assault upon a defenceless town.

Why must Kansas be laid waste? The real cause, amid a volume of excuses offered, lay in the hatred of the Pro-Slavery spirit toward the staunch, invincible young city of Lawrence, and in the depraved, ferocious spirit of William Clarke Quantrill. For five years, before he was outlawed in 1862, he had scourged the State. Here he had led a life of crime, and when he was driven from its confines, he carried with him a bitterness only such a nature as his could compass. Across the border he found his place by natural selection with the Pro-Slavery ruffians, and he combined their cause with his own. He hated Kansas as a murderer hates the spot where his deed of infamy is laid, and he was lured back to it by the same mental law. He knew Kansas ought to destroy him. Hence he would strike first. The time to act was now; the place, Lawrence.

In the dim light of the night, for the thing was hatched in the dark of the moon, a horseman was riding across the Missouri countryside toward the guerrilla camp. The horse might have belonged to a border man; the code of these men allowed them letters of marque for good horses always; but the rider was not of the border type. He rode as easily as they, but his was a military figure, and even in the shadowy starlight there was something that marked him for a gentleman, not a guerrilla. If the light had been stronger, one could have read in the still handsome face the lines of cruelty that his hidden crimes and selfish greed and trickery had put there. He was seeking the camp of Quantrill on a friendly errand. Yet he was the father of a son who had helped to drive Pickett back at Gettysburg a month

before, and of a son just beginning his camp life in Lawrence, and of a sweet-faced daughter independently earning her living — Boniface Penwin, product of a slave-ridden land, a gentleman's love of culture and a gambler's passion. Behind him a swift-footed figure pressed silently and cautiously, never varying his half-running, half-walking gait.

It was midnight when Penwin reached the guerrilla camp. He seemed familiar with the place, for he tied his horse and walked about the outer circle of sleeping men with the ease of one who knew his ground. In the blackness beyond the camp, lighted yet by little smudgy flares, the footman waited. Still and dark, as the blackness about him, he watched Colonel Penwin moving silently along until he seemed to find the man he wanted. The man was a light sleeper, for Penwin roused him easily, and the colonel's presence brought no surprise to him. The two, without a word, sought the shadows where the watcher stood. He dropped to the ground and lay like a dead man, or a sleeping guerrilla. Their conference was brief and the prostrate listener heard it all.

"You'll do that for me, Bill?" the horseman asked. "Don't play the coward this time like you did at Darrow's and Nethercote's and in Coleman's Dell."

"But we are not to molest the ladies," Bill urged. "You know Captain Quantrill. And the chances are one in a thousand I'd have the good luck to steal it, even if I could get away from the band."

"Bill, you know Boniface Penwin. It's a thousand dollars, good Confederate money, if you do it," the colonel urged.

"I'll do it," Bill agreed.

Then the horseman mounted and retraced his way

toward Kansas City, and behind him trotted the swift footman.

It was Pelathe, the Shawnee Indian; and the man who had been waiting for Penwin was the coward, Bill, of the old border strife days in the Vinland Valley.

The hot August day slipped into a still evening. The first quarter of the moon was due two nights hence, and by midnight there was no light save the glitter of far-away pitiless stars.

Where the old Leavenworth and Fort Scott military road crosses the State line into Missouri a body of four hundred fifty men swept into Kansas; and in the dusk of the evening pushed rapidly toward the northwest. They were splendidly mounted, and splendidly they rode. In all the history of warfare perhaps no cavalry organization ever surpassed the horsemanship of this company riding now across the beautiful uplands and fertile valleys toward the doomed city of Lawrence.

At the head of the band was their leader, Quantrill, mounted on a great brown horse. Slender, erect, firm-seated as a Centaur, in the deepening twilight he made a striking figure outlined against the western horizon. He wore cavalry boots, gray pantaloons, and a brown woolen guerrilla over-shirt, beautifully embroidered by a woman's hands, for, monster that he was, Quantrill had many loves. He wore a soft black hat with a gold cord about it, and he was heavily armed. The merciful night shadows concealed the exultation and dogged determination of the face, the compressed lips, and the fiendish blood lust of the tiger eyes, veiled by low-hanging lids.

Behind him surged his force of skilled horsemen. Riding recklessly in rough but certain order, they seemed

to challenge all the fates of chance and furies of evil to thwart them in their pursuit of an inhuman purpose. In this company were some misguided men, products of war and disaster, but hardly comprehending the atrocity of this night's business. But the main body were seasoned guerrillas, the outgrowth of the old border ruffian days. Their leaders were Younger and the James boys of later bandit infamy; with George Todd, whose thirst for blood is beyond the comprehension of these safe and happy days; and Bill Anderson, who burned men alive, and adorned his horse's head stall with women's scalps.

So, in the darkness of the peaceful midnight land, sweet with the summer dew, this band, nearly half a thousand strong, writhed its huge lengths along the prairie trails, swift, merciless, and deadly; while the town for which its venom was gathered slept in serene security, unconscious of the peril surging toward it. Where the roadways were puzzling, lone farmhouses were roused and a guide demanded, at the revolver's muzzle, to show the way to Lawrence. If the guide resembled any one known to have once lived in Missouri, or if he could not furnish the information wanted, or if he was no longer needed, he was left dead by the way. Ten guides within eight miles fell for no other crime than this. Evening deepened into night. Midnight came, and then the dank chill of the prairie lands in the dead darkness of the hours that follow; and still the fiends rode madly on.

The first light was in the eastern sky. The song birds had begun their little trills of joy, and then the crowing of the cocks announced the breaking of a new day. On a height to the southeast of Lawrence the pack halted. Before them lay the beautiful Wakarusa. To

the south was the Vinland Valley. Across the Kaw, gleaming in the first crimson glamour of morning, were the fertile Delaware holdings, and away to the west Night's curtains, misty and gray in the paling gloom, rolled back to reveal a land,

Fair as a garden of the Lord.

Mount Oread wore now the crown of a sweet summer dawn; and down by the riverside, in purple shadows still, Lawrence was in its beauty sleep, dreaming not of aught it had to fear.

On the brow of the height the dust-grimed men, wild-eyed from their sleepless night of hard riding, twined themselves behind their leader in deadly pause like a serpent about to strike.

Quantrill sat like a figure carved in stone, looking out over the landscape and down at the city he had doomed to death because it held the record of his atrocious crimes against him. Now he had come in his power, and he gloated over his opportunity; grasping closer the long death-roll, that he might let none escape, he rode along the silent ranks of waiting men. At the last minute many of these hesitated. There were some humane hearts under the guerrilla shirts. They could rob and murder after the highway fashion of lawlessness, and in the license of Civil War banditti. But in the gracious beauty of this August dawn, the soft, cool airs of the summer morning fanning their feverish cheeks; the beauty of dew-diamond grasses, and rainbow tinted waves of prairie verdure, green and orange and yellow, shimmering in the golden glory of the new-born day; the soft coo of birds astir, the faint homey sounds of awakening farmyards; and the utter absence of personal cause for revenge; with danger to each man loom-

ing near — not a few were ready to hold back their hands from such foul cruelty against the helpless and innocent.

Along the silent ranks their leader passed.

"You can do as you please," he cried, daring. "I am going into Lawrence."

He wheeled his horse about and driving his spurs deep into its sides, he leaped onward toward the goal of his maniac mission. The men caught the poison of his spirit. In a column of fours they uncoiled, and with yells and curses they lunged forward in huge ripples, and reckless as demons, mad as fiends, they hurled themselves upon the defenceless town just waking from its peaceful slumber.

Strange is the story of this morning's doing. And tragically strange that no warning should have foretold, nor cry of alarm have reached hither, nor means of rescue availed. Military authorities on the Missouri line had ignored the reports of possible raids being planned, and Fate played a cruel hand that night in holding back the heroic ones who risked their lives to carry the alarm to Lawrence.

At midnight a courier had brought the news to the Union headquarters in Kansas City that a great band of guerrillas in all their war paint was whirling into Kansas; and the headquarters knew that Doom was riding westward with that invading gang. But Lawrence was two score miles away. No telegraph, no telephone, no warning rocket shot heavenward, no wireless ripple of rescuing breath could avail. South of the Kaw River was half a regiment of murderers no man might pass and live. North of the river was the rough, unfamiliar region traversed by no broad highways, and with only a few beaten trails.

Rose up then Pelathe, the Shawnee,— the Eagle, for that is the meaning of Pelathe. He had come in with the courier who brought the news.

"I will try, if you will let me go."

And they let him go.

Into the blackness of the midnight he plunged to pawn his life, if need be, and save a city. He was mounted on a sorrel mare, a Kentucky thoroughbred of the finest equine instinct and power. He had the Red man's dress and the white man's firearms, the spirit of a hero, and the Christian's unselfish loyalty. Moreover, he knew with an Indian's acuteness the streams and woods and prairies that lay north of the Kaw, and he chose his way wisely.

It was one by the clock when Pelathe trotted out of old Quindaro, where his journey proper began, and threaded his way westward. He rode leisurely at first for wisdom's sake. By two o'clock his speed was terrific, and that magnificent strength only a thoroughbred possesses, told out in the long even strokes of flying hoofs. Three o'clock, and still the sorrel mare kept up her gait undiminished, but now her breath came short and hard.

Pelathe halted, and with the big red handkerchief he wore about his neck he rubbed her limbs and body, and led her slowly now. A little water only he let her drink, and he washed the foam from her bridle bits.

Then he was off again, and again the best blood of Kentucky was telling in the splendid power of that beautiful creature he bestrode. The landscape reeled by, and wood, and stream, and misty prairie were like ocean tides sweeping eastward as he swung away and away to the west. And now, far before him in the first dim lift-

ing of the summer night toward dawning, he could see the black woodland in the southwest and he knew that Lawrence was just beyond it. An hour more. Oh, God, for one more hour to do the work of Him who taught men how to find a life by losing it!

But the noble steed was failing now and her breathing, the marvelous second wind that had carried him so far, was almost spent.

Pelathe was fighting with Death for a doomed town. Human life meant more than the life of even this faithful animal, and in the struggle, the lesser must be sacrificed. He set his face with an Indian's hardness and gripping his hunting knife, he cut long gashes in the mare's shoulders and rubbed gunpowder into them. She sprang forward with fury, carrying her rider yet a few miles further. Then with a cry, once heard, never to be forgotten, she fell beneath him, dead. Down the land went a streak of gray. It was Pelathe, whose feet, shod with the swiftness of a swift-footed race, was leaping with the long lope of a panther down the trail, hoping still to win to victory.

Day-dawn now, and the Delaware lands, where cabins nestled in the woodsy bottoms, lay before him. Lifting up his voice, he gave forth the long, quavering war-cry of a fighting people, that he might call forth these intrepid Delawares to his aid. Then he seized a pony from the nearest corral and, like a Plains Indian in full flight for battle, he swirled along the last lap of his strange ride. And the ferry to the Kaw was gained. Beyond it, Lawrence lay.

The August sun was pouring out its glory of morning light. The day was rich with the warmth and grandeur of mid-summer. But across the Kaw, the tide of battle already engulfed the doomed city, and Pelathe had lost.

When the voice of the world shouts its chorus,
  Its pæans for those who have won,
When the trumpet is sounding triumphant,
  And high to the breeze and the sun
Glad banners are waving, hand clapping, and hurrying feet
Thronging after the laurel-crowned victors,

then remember we with reverence and praise the men who failed. No less noble than Sheridan and Paul Revere, who rode and won, is the name of Pelathe, who rode and lost. Some day the people of the West will list his name in their scroll of uncrowned heroes, for that he gave his best effort to save what Fate had foredoomed should perish.

CHAPTER XXVI

"TIGER! TIGER!"

In the homes of their rearing,
  Yet warm with their lives,
Ye wait the dead only,
  Poor children and wives!

—John Greenleaf Whittier.

ON the night of the "Peace-party" long ago, the little Merriford girls and the little Speer boys had raced about the rooms together. Annie and Nellie Merriford were quite young grown-ups now. At least Joe and Tarley thought so. And the Speer boys were half-way between boyhood and manhood. Mark Darrow came back to Kansas in August for a brief two days; one at the cedar-sheltered home overlooking the Vinland Valley, the Darrarat still to the Darrow boys. The other day he spent in Lawrence. The morning after that he must report to General Ewing's headquarters at Kansas City.

Wars do not curb the spirit of youth. While Quantrill's band was swinging across the countryside in the Summer evening with its lists of boys' names set in black for its own black purposes, Tarley and Joe and the Merriford girls, with Lucy and Mark, and the Speers, and other young people, spent a gay evening together. The Kaw was swollen with heavy rains up to the valley and the ferry was out of commission. The young folks went down to the river and watched the muddy tides pour along. Then they came back to Rosalind St. Felix's home

on the edge of town and spent the last happy hours of a care-free day. Since the sacking of Lawrence in '56, the St. Felix home had been a cottage in the lower land well to the southeast. Rosalind and Lucy, with Aunt Crystal for a servant, called themselves the Southern Confederacy, but there was no more popular Union home in Lawrence than the St. Felix home.

On the way from the ferry, Mark and Lucy loitered behind the others.

"Lucy," Mark said. "Do you always want to live down in the lowland and be a part of the Southern Confederacy?"

"Oh, it's nice down there," Lucy replied, "and it is all the home I have."

Lucy was very "sweet and lazy" when she chose to be, and although she had only her own hands to support herself, she never lost her sunny spirit, and seldom took trouble in for a companion.

"But, Lucy, you can't always take care of yourself alone." Mark drew her arm closer through his own.

"Then I'll hunt somebody else to take care of too. Would you like any looking after then?" Lucy drawled in a soft Southern voice.

They were standing by a thick clump of bushes growing about an old well by the wayside.

"Girlie, I'm going away in the morning. Father and mother are at Merriford's for the night. Patty Wren and Beth are at Rosalind's. Coke will be up here early to take them home. Everybody that's worth anything, except Ellie, is here to tell me good-bye. Sweetheart, let me take away your promise to leave the 'Confederacy' and join the 'Union' when the war is over."

He dropped her arm and took both of her hands as they stood by the bushes at the old well.

"Mark, I always thought you'd come like a hero and rescue me from peril and we would remember it for the fierceness of things," Lucy said, sweetly. "I've always liked you — only this is so very unromantic. You ought to be saving my life, or something like that; with such a thrill I'd never forget the minute. When you can do that, Mark, then maybe I'll say 'yes' to anything."

"Oh, well, Lucy, let's turn the tables. Just play that you save me instead," Mark urged. "Poke me down in this old well and stand guard over me to ward off my foes. That would make you remember the time all right. Shall I jump in?"

"Whenever I do that, you'll know I care a whole lot more for you than I ever could for anybody else," and Lucy refused to consider the matter further.

Coke Wren rode into Lawrence late that night. Patty wanted to go home in the cool of the morning and Coke knew when that time came for Patty. The St. Felix household was early astir. Aunt Crystal was getting breakfast and the girls were chattering in their room.

"That's a pretty chain, Beth," Lucy exclaimed, as Beth was finishing her dressing. "Let me try it on."

Lucy had heard the early history of that quaint trinket from Mark, and it meant more to her since what had passed between Mark and herself.

Beth had unclasped the dainty thing and put it in her hand, when a fierce shouting, a volley of curses, and the roar of cavalry hoofs filled the air. Lucy, impulsive as ever, dropped the chain on the dresser, and the girls rushed to the gate, forgetful of everything else in this sudden outburst of noise. Beth could not blame Lucy for her heedlessness, and in the counting up of lost treasures in the days that followed nobody ever knew how much sorrow the careless flinging down of that gold

chain brought to the girl who had worn it as a sacred pledge.

Across the open country from the southeast came a swarm of dark-faced men, bearing down upon them. The girls were terror-stricken and could not move. Beth was conscious of the cry, "Dr. St. Felix's house. Leave it alone," and of the men passing like a hurricane.

Gazing motionless as a bird in the fascination of a snake, she noted one of the riders suddenly rein up at the gate, and she recognized Bill, the Coward, whose face she had seen in the ravine on the winter morning during the Wakarusa War. Beth had never forgotten that man's face. There was a look of exultation on it as of one who had come unexpectedly upon a coveted opportunity. He stared at Beth, and at the house, and wheeling his horse, he rode half round it. As he turned back he said not unpleasantly:

"Ladies, you won't be molested. No woman will be harmed. If you have any friends you want to pass that word to, run quick and do it. But no man will escape," he added, savagely.

Then he galloped on and soon he was smeared into the dust and blackness of the hurrying pack. If Quantrill had heard this warning given on the beginning of this morning's awful work, he would have shot the one who gave it without a word. But Bill, the Coward, could not be true to any cause very long.

The cavalcade of four hundred fifty guerrillas, with their brilliantly dyed over-shirts, their rakishly slouched hats, their long matted hair flying in the wind, their bridle reins in their teeth or flung across the saddle bow, their deadly revolvers cocked, their horses at full gallop, swirled along like a tornado of human hate and fell upon the city in its destroying power.

The boys' camp, where twenty-one young patriots slept, lay in the track of the cyclone. They wore the soldier's uniform, but as yet they were unarmed. Above their tents the flag floated lazily on the morning breeze. The guerrillas struck this camp first and rode it down, trampling the half-wakened, beardless boys to their death or shooting them without quarter. In the terrible panic amid the shower of curses and storm of bullets and thundering crash of horses' feet, only five escaped. Tarley and Joe lay at the middle of the camp and were up with first shouts. The flag floated just above them, and in the avalanche of slaughter hurling down upon them Tarley caught the beautiful banner and with Joe, ran for his life.

The two leaped toward a dwelling nearby. Joe was a step ahead and he sprang through an open kitchen window. As he turned to drag Tarley in also, he saw the boy with whom he had played and worked through eight of his boyhood years, pleading for his life with face upturned to a brute on horseback. But "no quarter" was the cry that day.

Joe saw Tarley wrap the Stars and Stripes about his shoulders as if to ward off his enemy, then his face grew white — and that was all.

Joe ran from the house as a guerrilla came crashing into it. In the street the man who killed Tarley had tied the Star-spangled Banner to his horse's tail and was dashing away with the flag trailing in the dust behind him.

"I'd rather be Tarley than that man if I should live till Eternity grew old," Joe thought, and then he ran with the speed of despair toward the shelter of the bushes by the Kaw River.

Tarley lay where the man — one Skaggs by name —

Shooting them without quarter

had left him. In his fiercely clinched fist was a bit of blue with a white star torn from the old flag, as in his last moment it was wrested from him. On his boyish face, however, the smile was not of war, but of eternal peace. They pinned that star on his bosom the next day. And Hiram Darrow, gazing down upon him, said:

"So Winthrop Merriford's boy perished."

While the boys' camp was being destroyed, Quantrill and his lieutenant rode headlong up Massachusetts Avenue, firing one to the left and the other to the right, until they reached the Kaw River. Cutting the cable of the ferry, they severed the possibility of aid coming in from the north side, and the town was wholly at their mercy.

It was waking now, but the meaning of the uproar had scarcely dawned on the startled citizens when the shout, "On to the hotel," filled the air. Before the Eldridge House the pack gathered. It was a splendid hostelry, built of brick, four stories high, well equipped and strong as a fort. The only thing in Lawrence that Quantrill's men feared that day was the Eldridge House. Any show of resistance here would have checked the tide of attack, for the outlaw and the guerrilla is by occupation a coward, and his trade is plied only by cowardly methods. Men in honorable warfare win by force, and strategy, and courageous daring. The border raider must always watch for the ambush and the bullet by which alone he himself can win, and he falls before the fearless foe.

But the Eldridge House had no means, nor controlling mind, to meet such a fierce and sudden enemy. It offered no resistance and amid looting and riot it was given to the flames.

Before it Quantrill, his beardless, sun-browned face aglow with the sense of his power, his eyes yellow-green

with viper poison, rising in his stirrups and waving his hand, dismissed his bands with the supreme order:

"Kill! kill! burn! burn! and you will make no mistake."

And they burst upon the town dazed and defenceless under their smoking guns and swinging firebrands.

Meanwhile, back at the St. Felix home, Patty Wren was the first to speak.

"No man will escape. They're goin' to kill all the men. I'll bet they don't get Cokey. Let's run like mad dogs, girls, and warn everybody we can."

"I'll find Mark," Lucy cried, and with the word she was off.

"Run, Patty, and tell Coke. I'll get to Merriford's somehow. Rosalind, can you find Mr. Speer and the boys?" Beth urged.

"Oh, the boys slept in the printing office last night. They went there from here," Rosalind exclaimed. "I'll try to reach them."

"But Tarley and Joe," Aunt Crystal wailed.

"Oh, they're only boys, Auntie. They won't harm boys," Rosalind assured her. "You must stay on guard here till we get back."

"Oh, Lord, guard me then," the old woman moaned. "Are you all sure about my boys?"

But the girls were off, and Aunt Crystal ran into the house and began to fasten the doors. As she fumbled at the locks she suddenly felt a revolver against her ear and a command to keep still.

"Oh, Lord," she shrieked, then collapsed, wordless under the gun of the coward Bill.

"Get up and do as I say, and you won't be hurt," he said.

The trembling woman rose to her feet.

"Go to the young ladies' room and find the gold chain Miss Lamond wears. March!" he commanded.

"Miss Beth done wearin' dat chain," the negress faltered out.

"She didn't have it on just now. You find it for me or you'll never leave this house alive."

Then to himself Bill added: "Never expected such luck as this. It's better'n cuttin' away from Quantrill and hangin' around Lamond's house for days tryin' to get that chain, an' slim chance ever gettin' to lay my hands on it. Well, I'm a good thousand dollars ahead right now."

Aunt Crystal, believing her time had come, led the way to the girls' room. There lay the chain on the dresser where Lucy had dropped it. Bill, the Coward, caught it quickly.

"Now, you ever say one word about this and you'll get yours. Down on your knees and swear you'll keep your mouth shut."

Poor old Aunt Crystal, with a six-shooter in her face, dropped to her knees and mumbled an oath to keep silent. When she stood up the raider was gone.

"I ain't gwine to stay here and be killed and robbed," she cried, and she rushed out of the back door and started toward the Kaw River.

Lucy Penwin had sought the house where Mark was a guest for the night. He had risen early and was slipping out of the side door that he might not disturb the household, when he ran plump into Lucy. And at the same moment the uproar from the boys' camp burst upon him.

"Oh, Mark," Lucy cried excitedly, catching him about the neck and clinging to him. "Come quick. Come with me!"

Mark threw his arms about her, and kissing her upturned face, exclaimed:

"Let's not come. Let's just stay. What's all this awful noise, Lucy?"

But Lucy's white face and the roar of the fray's beginning checked him.

"It's a band of raiders and they'll kill every man they see. They said so. Come with me," she implored, dragging at his arms.

"Let me go and fight, Lucy." Mark would not be dragged.

"One against a thousand! Listen to that."

The shrieks from the boys' camp and the charge upon Massachusetts Avenue grew louder.

"Mark, you can save only yourself. That's all."

"But Joe and Tarley," Mark cried.

"Oh, you cannot save them now. Look where their camp was. It's all lost. Dear Mark, come with me." Lucy's arms were about Mark's neck, and her tears and entreaties were pitiful.

Mark had been with John Brown and faced the force that destroyed Osawatomie. He had held his place in the battle line at Corinth, and had scouted and routed in the fierce vendetta struggle across Arkansas and clear into Texas, and he was never a coward. It was not fear for his own safety, but love for his boyhood sweetheart that controlled him now as he hurried with Lucy toward a place of hiding. And not a moment too soon, for as they ran across the track of the destroyers a volley of bullets pursued them. They leaped behind the nearest building, then fled toward the river. The bushes about the old abandoned well lay in their track. The uproar was increasing, and beyond them a sentry was rushing to cut off their way.

"Jump in here, Mark. I'll stand guard. It's the only way to save your life," Lucy implored.

Mark sprang through the bushes. The well was shallow, but the rains had left a few feet of water in it.

"Give me a timber, Lucy," Mark called, as he hung braced above the water.

Lucy wrenched at a piece of the tumbled-down framework, and the whole thing fell. She gave a shriek, but Mark called back:

"All right, Lucy; I've got it now," and he dragged down a portion of the frame above him. Not for nothing had he climbed about his Darrarat in earlier years, for he braced himself until he had forced a crosspiece between the rough walls, and then he lodged himself securely.

Overhead a tiny patch of summer sky shone clear and blue, and oh, so pure and far away! Across its crystal space the fallen timbers checkered the light. The dust sifted down and the bushes dragged under by the fall of the timbers darkened the opening and shut out the purer air. Once Mark looked up to find Lucy's face watching to see that he was safe. He smiled up at her as he caught the vision, for her eyes had told him what her lips had not yet confessed.

Then memory brought back to him the October afternoon of long ago when the children of the three settlers' families had gone nutting together. And the picture of the group beside the old Trail on the height above the Vinland Valley was as vivid as on that day. Again Mark saw the pretty girlish face of Lucy Penwin, and Beth with her golden hair, Joe and Tarley joined by the grapevine tie, and Craig and Elliot on either side of the girl who was to be more and more in their thoughts in the coming years,— the ten years of trouble of which the

stranger had warned them. Through dust and dirt and fallen timbers and crushed weeds he had just seen in Lucy's eyes the fulfillment of that day's unrealized hope. Joe and Tarley might be lying under the trampling hoofs of the guerrillas' horses, now joined still in death. And Elliot and Craig and Beth? The ten years of trouble were telling off as prophesied. Mark's senses seemed dulled a little, for the air of the old well was foul. Then the terror of the situation seized him, and he fought against the invisible poison gas clutching his throat with its choking grip. He could front the raiders' bullets, but there was no weapon with which to meet the death-power in the walled-in space that held him.

The cry of "Kill! kill! burn! burn!" rolled over his head. Men ran or hid, and death pursued and spared not. There was no quarter, no mercy, no truth to the promise of a safeguard. Down almost to the brink of the old well came Bill the Coward and half a dozen followers, mad with the frenzy of the fray. As they neared the well Lucy sprang in front of them.

"Hold on! hold on!" she shouted.

"We don't harm ladies," Bill repeated.

"But you'll ride into that old well," she warned them, and they reared and turned aside. "I'm Colonel Boniface Penwin's daughter. I would n't want a man killed in that well."

She smiled sweetly up at Bill, who recognized her now, for he had been much in the Penwin home.

"Thank you, Miss Penwin," and the horsemen were away.

"It's all right, Mark," the girl called softly. But only a faint whistle answered her.

It seemed hours to Lucy before the tide of scourging

rolled back from the city and she dared to approach the well. All the while she stayed faithfully near and guarded the place as a loving woman guards her heart treasure. The damp poison crept over Mark. The smothered opening above let in only a faint sifting of living air. And when at last Lucy dared to summon him he was hardly conscious. She never could recall who helped her to rescue him, so terrible was the strain of that morning on her young life. But she remembered the face of a Delaware Indian, and of a strong man's quick action. It must have been White Turkey, for with twenty other Delawares and Pelathe, the Shawnee, White Turkey manned the first boat that crossed the Kaw at last and pursued the guerrillas on their retreat to Missouri. And then Mark lay on the brown August grasses, under the shelter of the trees. His head was in her lap and she recalled his words.

"You said you'd care a whole lot more for me than for anybody else if you ever got me out of this well."

All else was a blank to both of them, but from that day Mark's brown hair was gray.

As Joe Darrow ran for his life, a bullet struck his shoulder and he fell face downward in the dust. When the ruffian who had fired the bullet leaped from his horse to finish his work, a big black face was thrust close to Joe's body, and a voice in his ear whispered:

"Play dead, Joey! For the love of God, play dead! I'll help ye."

Aunt Crystal rolled the limp body into her broad lap, and Joey had no need to play dead. The dust and blood was smeared over his unconscious face and he lay prostrate.

Then fiercely, as all the tigress in her nature roused

itself, she snarled out: "You done killed him once. You kill him again, and I'll tell on you! I'll tell, ef you kill me."

She had recognized Bill, who was such a useful emissary of all evil outrage on this black day. And the coward in Bill made him quail before her whom he could have silenced easily.

Aunt Crystal carried the wounded boy to the shelter of the brush down beside the muddy Kaw, and guarded him vengefully from every foe. He was not unconscious long, but his wound was severe. The old woman was bending lovingly above him when a sudden shout made her leap to her feet as one ruffian cried to another.

"He's alive. Get him!"

The day seemed lost to the faithful old woman, but desperation made her turn strategist.

"Lord A'mighty! look yander, quick!" she cried, pointing across the river.

The guerrilla, on the alert for ambush, held his gun and looked. Beyond the Kaw a great willow leaned far over the water. Lying out on an overhanging limb above the foaming floods, Pelathe the Shawnee was coiled like a snake in the sun. He raised his gun and took aim at the guerrilla.

"He's too far away," the raider said, carelessly, and turned to fire at Joe. But he had undergauged the Indian's range and marksmanship. The bullet sped true, and one wounded raider was hauled out of town that day, disqualified forever from guerrilla service.

For hours Aunt Crystal watched beside the wounded boy. At the approach of horsemen she would compose his form and weep beside him as he feigned death. And so she saved him.

The roar of the flames increased as house after house was set on fire; and the roar of the raiders increased as men fleeing from the flames were shot down.

John Speer's boys were sleeping in their father's printing office. One sleeps still where he lay that morning. In the ashes of the burned building, not even a trace of him could be found. For thirteen years his mother lived on, hoping always for his return, and putting his chair at the table for his coming. But he came not any more, and his mother saw him not until she went to him.

Annie Merriford stood at an upper window, spellbound with fear, watching the scene of carnage. The Eldridge House was aflame and the tide was sweeping toward her. Annie saw her childhood playmate, young John Speer, rush from his father's office, as Skaggs, with the flag still swinging to his horse's tail, dashed around a street corner. The ruffian demanded money, and the boy gave over his purse. Then, defenceless as he stood, Skaggs shot him down, and left him near a burning building. The girl heard his cry for aid as the flames swept nearer to the helpless boy. Another guerrilla dashed up, and when he had passed on, John was no more, and Annie fell upon the floor, insensible.

Patty Wren had just reached the Merriford home when a little old woman ran by. Her shoes were heavy, her skirts were short and floppy, and her sunbonnet was big and flappy. Down the street she rushed into the back door of a cottage just as two guerrillas burst open the front door. A frail old man, with his white-haired wife and little grandson, cowered in terror before the invaders.

"Don't kill him. He's old and helpless," the trembling wife pleaded with men who knew no mercy.

"We 'll shoot him down. He 's got boys in the Union army," they yelled as the old man stood up before them.

"No, you won't," a queer, squeaky voice piped up, and the little old woman with the floppy skirts and sunbonnet plunged to the front. "You get right out," she shrieked.

For an old woman, her strength was wonderful. She sent one ruffian headlong from the door, and caught the other's arm so suddenly that he staggered back, and his cocked revolver sent a harmless bullet through the floor.

"Here, babe," to the grandchild, "hand Aunt Tildy that kettle of hot water, quick. We 'll do some killin', too." But the guerrilla had wrenched himself loose and disappeared.

"I want to know!" whined the old woman with the floppy skirts, as she disappeared.

And in and out, where brands were hottest and bullets thickest, and helpless humanity most needy, old Aunt Tildy pushed her way, and few guessed that a little Yankee was taking on this disguise to save the life he was risking every minute for others. Nobody could forecast Coke Wren's ingenuity and resource, save that it would be turned toward humane effort always.

Amid all the bedlam of demons, the blood of the Scotch Lamond pulsed fearlessly now as when on the old headland of Ard Lamond the warring clan had battled with its foes. Across the street from Merriford's a baby's cries cut the air. The house was on fire and the roof was beginning to blaze. Raiders, mad with unchecked power, vengefully guarded the place. They were burning out the owner hidden inside. The wails came pitifully shrill, and no mother's form appeared.

"Mrs. Darrow, I must go," Beth cried, and she darted into the street.

In an instant she was surrounded by plunging steeds and desperate men. Beth was beautiful on her wedding day with all a bride's dainty loveliness, but when Isabel Darrow saw her in this terrible moment the woman understood why her eldest born would wait during the years with all of a Quaker's patience for what was of such royal worth.

Daring and reckless for herself, true daughter of David Lamond, Beth faced the men about her. In her white dress, her fair face bloodless, her gray eyes flashing fire, her crown of golden hair gleaming in the morning light, she seemed a goddess of power men dare not insult. Catching the bridle rein of the nearest horse, she jerked it backward and deftly cleared the space, and the next and the next she flung aside, opening a path as heedlessly as if the men were only bushes crowding a narrow way.

Behind her at first, and then beside her, was Isabel Darrow, and the two fought valiantly together.

It were a daring artist to-day who would paint that scene and call it historical of the nineteenth century. So like to the barbarism of the fierce old Vandal and the terrible Hun was the sight that August morning saw in the streets of Lawrence. Entrapped in the burning house was the father. Beside the cradle where a baby wailed pitifully was an unconscious mother. Inside was death by fire; outside, death by bullets.

Before the blazing building was a maniac crew of horsemen with their madly rearing steeds, their murderous weapons, their vengeful threats and curses. And in their midst, carving out a way with only a woman's

slender strength, was the golden-haired Scotch lassie and the sweet-faced Quaker woman.

In and out through the plunging pile of fury, the daring courage of Elizabeth Lamond put a magnificent touch of power; while the Madonna face of Isabel Darrow, with the dark rippling folds of hair about her white brow, gave to the picture an immortal sublimity.

Onward they struggled, until one horseman only blocked their way — a great black steed reared upward with forefeet in air, as if to trample them into the dust of the street. It was David Lamond's horse stolen from the St. Felix stable. And the rider of the horse knew no longer any mercy for man or woman.

"Ho, Pluto! Ho, Pluto!" Beth cried.

For ten minutes the rider of the stolen Pluto had been training him to strike down human beings; but for ten years he had responded to Beth's call. The white horse for peace lay buried in the ravine by the Hole in the Rock; the red roan for bloodshed had gone back to the Delaware people; but the black horse for power was here. Dropping his head, he waited for Beth's gentle stroke.

Looking defiantly at his rider, Beth cried, "You can steal my horse, but you can't control him. Go, Pluto!"

And Pluto shot off with a lunge, leaving the way to the burning house clear for the rescuers' feet.

Inside the house, Beth lifted the terrified little one in her arms and it clung to her and nestled its baby curls against her white neck.

"Take my wife! take my wife!" the father pleaded.

Isabel lifted the semi-conscious woman, and with Beth's help they half led and half dragged her outside. And mother and child were saved.

The Merriford home was surrounded now. Cries of

"Burn the Boston man's house! Burn out Merriford's!" filled the air.

"Take everybody in there. Don't spare men nor women." It was Skaggs who said this. The tattered flag of American Liberty was still dragging at his horse's tail. "I dare you to come out, you cowards. I dare one of you to show your heads," he yelled.

"I don't take no dare," Patty Wren cried, as she flew to a window and flung it open. "What do you want? Major Merriford ain't here, nor no other man. Do you want to kill women, too?"

"We're goin' to burn this house. Get out if you want to save yourselves," the leader shouted, as he crowded Skaggs back.

Beth Lamond had taken the first news of the invaders' purpose to the Merriford home an hour or more ago. With the assurance of safety for the women, Hiram Darrow had left at once to warn men to seek safety. In all Lawrence, storm-beaten by violence, no other man was more fearless nor more self-possessed than Hiram Darrow. Not for nothing is the Inward Light. Not in vain the teaching that leads men to listen to their own souls in the Silence. In the day of danger this man, guiltless of a brother's blood, faced the peril of the hour with nerves of steel and spirit of command.

In and out, with marvelous judgment of how much to risk and how much to guard, he passed the word that brought safety to many a life. It seemed a miracle that no bullet reached him on the way, for he went as if on urgent but safe business.

In this hour he had seen the full force of the city's menace. Men feigning death to escape a second bullet. Men shot down with babies' arms about their necks. Women dragged from shielding prostrate wounded

fathers and husbands, that the guerrillas might kill and kill. Men promised protection on surrender, only to fall the moment they could be lined up in the open. All this Darrow had seen, and with the lust for loot, and the maddening force the whisky from the saloons had given, he doubted if any promise to protect women would long endure; so he hurried toward Merriford's as swiftly as he dared.

As Skaggs was thrust aside by the leader, his horse wheeled about just in time for its rider to catch sight of the Quaker springing inside through a rear door.

The roar that arose was deafening, with cries for "Darrow" and shouts and raging.

Darrow pushed his way to the front of the house.

"Come and get me if you want me," he called to the mob.

A growl of curses and the cries, "Go and get him! Take him out!"

But nobody followed his own advice.

"We'll get you yet. We'll kill you!" they yelled.

"Come and do it," rang out the Quaker's challenge.

But they failed to come. With direst threats, the horsemen rode away, and those on foot bided their time.

Beth and Isabel at last gained the house with their precious charges. The flames were devouring the home behind them which the guerrillas still held under guard. Inside a man's life was put to the choice.

"Can thee help him, Hiram?" Isabel asked, as she entered the place of safety.

He ran into the street, and a posse of men on foot hurled itself after him. Their leader was Bill, the Coward.

"We've got him now," they shouted.

A thrill of joy put strength into Hiram Darrow's arm. For as they gathered about him, the imprisoned man leaped at last from the burning building and fled away to safety. The whizzing of bullets failed to reach him as he ran; and in frenzy the mob rushed upon the Quaker.

Darrow was a man of kindliest spirit, who never carried a weapon in his life. He was tall, but slender rather than heavy, and of deliberate motion. Fighting in any manner was degrading in his eyes, and bloodshed abhorrent to him. By inheritance, and natural temperament, and fifty years of education and habit, he was a man of gentleness and peace. To-day he had been thrust into the wildest carnage. He had witnessed the breaking of every sacred law. His own sons were somewhere in the midst of this devil's debauch, living or dead, God knew. And now as he sought to save life, a dozen men encircled him like hungry wolves. Above inheritance, and temperament, and teaching, and habit, the Man in him asserted itself, and he stood up to the conflict. Before him was Bill the Coward, who knew his temper and habits, and Bill was one of a dozen ruffians. Never did a dozen fighting men receive a greater shock. With a swift, easy play of muscle and marvelous endurance and recoil, the Quaker met his task. As quickly as they came, he sent them on. Two men fell into the flames and three were needed to drag them out. Another and another fell backward, for the Quaker could use either fist dextrously and independently of the other. A deft whirl, and another man sprawled toward the glowing furnace. Bill, the Coward, ran away, of course. There was no chance to use his gun with safety to his fellows, and he could fight only helpless people. While the men were rescuing the third guerrilla from the flames, the last man fired his revolver

with a yell, and the brave, stubborn Quaker, who had matched himself against the dozen, fell.

In the presence of danger, the courage of women is sublime. If ever "troops of beautiful, tall angels" stood round about the brave in heart, they shielded Isabel Darrow, the sweet-browed Quaker woman, in this awful time. The streets were clogged with the wounded and dead, and the flames were searing all alike. Into all this chaos she sprang. The guerrilla's arm was stretched for a second time — he could not believe one bullet strong enough for such a fighter — when Isabel caught his shoulder and wrenched aside the deadly weapon. It was the same grip that had thrown the same man headlong into the cedars on the night when this man had come to the sheltered cabin on the hilltop above the Vinland Valley,— a quick, steel-like, unbreakable clutch. Strange is the grasp of memory. The sharp, blinding, nagging cedar needles seemed to tear his face again in the moment, as he was flung aside and Isabel Darrow, beautiful and strong in her utter fearlessness, threw herself shield-like, between her husband and death.

Lifting the almost lifeless form of Hiram Darrow, she bore him toward the house. And as she struggled with her burden, one man whom Darrow had felled to the ground came now and helped to bear him into the security of the Merriford home.

Then the raiders rushed away to find the terror-stricken ones, to shoot down defenceless men and beardless boys, to rob and to destroy.

Fiercer yet rolled the blood-red wave of murder, along the ways of doom, and higher leaped the flames of burning destruction, and wilder did the looting pack — mad now with stolen whisky — break forth for plunder.

If History as written on our fair Continent needs ever furnish to an artist's brush its most atrocious dream of cruelty, its most inhuman carnage of a savage lust for gore — its truest prototype of Hell — let it turn to the story of that August day and picture Lawrence as she lay before the dew had left the sheltered grasses. In the stories of peril and power there is no fellow to it.

And all the while, about the city of death, Quantrill, the chieftain of the accursed horde, passed from spot to spot, directing all, increasing all, gloating in all the worse than beastly business. In all the dress of the guerrilla, and with exultation of a demon on his face, he came to the top of Mount Oread. Looking out over the valley whose exquisite beauty challenges the West for a companion to it, and down upon the roaring hell of agony and demolition his hands were controlling, his heavy eyelids drooping over his yellow-green eyes, he made a picture the like of which Mount Oread will see not any more.

By nine o'clock the lookout placed above the city sent down the word that horsemen were approaching from the southeast, and the gang began to gather for hasty flight. They had fresh horses, stolen from the Lawrence stables, and their loot was hung upon their own more jaded mounts.

Where the city park makes a beauty spot on Massachusetts Avenue to-day, they gathered and began their exodus. A low hedge fence ran near. And along this came Skaggs, the merciless slayer of helpless boys, the last tatters of the Nation's emblem fluttering from his horse's tail. Exulting in his blood gluttony, he rode to escape from a city he had so inhumanly wronged.

Down by the hedge, a boy crouched — the youngest of the Speers, who had played also with other children

at the peace-party long ago. In his hands he clutched a loaded rifle — and his brothers were lost. He aimed at Skaggs; the ball struck the villain's shoulder-blade, but he was only wounded. Another minute and another boy would have been added to his record. But it was time for his record to be closed and handed in. Behind Skaggs loomed up White Turkey, the Delaware, grand defender of women and children.

"Him kill everybody. Me kill him!"

And when White Turkey shot, he shot to kill.

And so it was that on this August day, the supreme sacrifice for loyalty to a belief in human liberty had been required of a freedom-loving State in its defenceless hour. The sacrificial altar was the indomitable city by the Kaw.

The beastly crew rushed off as they had come; and slaughter and burning made the milestones of their way, as with a running battle they fought off all pursuers and gained again the wooded coverts of a friendly State. And Lawrence roused up amid her ruins and put out her fires. The fierce August sun beat down on wounded and dying. Pillage had taken sacred keepsake and valuable treasure. Fire had laid waste home and office and store. And of the uncoffined dead for that brief space of guerrilla seizure, Lawrence mourned for a hundred fifty men and boys, while of widows there were eighty, and of children two hundred fifty left to dreary homes. Dead forms lay in the desolate places, and the mourners went about the streets.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE MIRACLE OF SONG

And the Star-Spangled Banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the Free and the home of the Brave.

THE late May sunshine poured down with oppressive heat. The air was heavy with humidity. In the rolling, half-wooded country the sea breeze was beaten back and diffused. For a month the Army of the Potomac, with its stern old Thor, General Grant, at the head, had been hammering along the Virginia countryside, buffeting its way toward Richmond. Between it and the Confederate Capital were the strongly fortified forces gathered behind their intrenchments at Cold Harbor.

For three summers the Vinland Valley boys had been in the field. The operations of the Army of the Potomac under General Grant did not tend to fatten men, and Elliot and Craig were lean and wiry, but field-hardened to great endurance. Craig had had one short furlough and had come back from the Vinland Valley as from a field of conquest. The boys marched side by side, and a comradeship of necessity sprang up between them. But the barrier first erected on the night after the October nutting, so long ago, had strengthened with the years. Elliot had not had leave of absence from the army, and his joy through the months was in the few letters from his mother and from Beth.

In the same company with the Kansas boys were several Missouri men — rough, unshaven, middle-aged fellows, who came East because they wanted to fight, and they did not care to take chances with Western guerrillas where they were well known. Three of these men interested Elliot Darrow. From their enlistment they took kindly to the young Quaker, and, crude as they were, they had a spirit of comradeship that touched him deeply.

War brought David Lamond into his kingdom. He was courageous, capable, and kindly, and his men adored him. He was Colonel Lamond now, wearing his badge by sheer merit of service; while his sturdy physique and stern Scotch nature, his unwavering loyalty and God-fearing spirit, all fitted him for leadership in a noble warfare.

The afternoon was growing into evening. The Army of the Potomac was encamped in the ravines and back on the level spaces beyond the Chickahominy. To-morrow the assault on Cold Harbor was ordered,— the only order in all that tremendous military campaign that General Grant ever regretted,— and this was the eve of battle.

Elliot Darrow was bathing his face and hands at a little brook that went gurgling down to the Chickahominy. He was homesick, as most home-loving men are, on the eve of a great fight, and war is never gentle in any feature.

"Well, I want to know ——"

There was no mistaking the Yankee drawl. When Elliot lifted his face and shook the water from his dripping dark waves of hair, Coke Wren was really before him.

"Anything from Kansas would look good to me. How

do you do?" And he shook Coke's hand as if he could never let it go.

"Yes, even me," Coke said. "Ninety-six and three-quarter pound still; that's how I do. Ef I'd only git that other quarter pound, they'd take me into the service. Been tryin' ever sence the Army broke out in '61. Any kind of place would suit me, but I'm no granddaddy long-legs, an' can't make the infantry step, an' I'm so light a cavalry horse'd think it had n't no mount on it, and 'd run amuck."

"Maybe they'd let you take Cotton Mather," Elliot suggested.

"Little guerrilla's throwed me too darned many times already. Don't want to be dumped right in front of the enemy's guns," Coke declared. And then they talked of many things.

"I'm here to see Major Merriford. Got a permit from them Powers. Colonel Lamond, he let me in here. Where's the Massachusetts men campin'?" Coke asked.

"Over beyond the next ravine. Lots of Boston men there," Elliot replied.

"Yes, I'm gittin' back East when I hear them talk. I've got business matters an' messages for Winthrop, the Major. Jupe's his body servant now, hain't he?"

Elliot nodded.

"Gosh be! but I'm plum proud of our Western men — stood up fer Kansas singly first when she was beset by her enemies. Jest hung on 'tel they settled the Kansas business; but it was such a darned big business, the whole country got more or less into the mix, all 'cause a line of Kansas men would n't never give down ner know rightly when they was licked. Dead men out West seems to me just gits up an' goes on fightin' same as if nothin' had happened."

"John Brown, and his followers for example?" Elliot suggested. "But how about the coward Quakers who stay at home?"

"Now, you rooster, shut up your crowin'," Wren exclaimed. "In the Quantrill raid, when I was just pinkin' round helpin' a little an' dodgin' things by playin' I was Aunt Tildy to the whole town, Hiram Darrow forgot he was a Quaker or anything else but a man. When it come to savin' another man's life, did n't he stand up in the street and face a dozen armed ruffians, an' him with no weapons at all? Yes, an' fight 'em all, too, 'cept one coward who could n't get in his gun-play; an' one coward who would n't meet him square after he 'd fit off ten of 'em, but went an' shot him in the back. Awful close call for your father, but he 's well now. He 's too good a man for the West to lose 'tel he 's ninety at least. And as to war now, Hiram Darrow knows it 's wrong for Hiram Darrow to shed blood, same time he 's givin' hisself heart an' soul to the makin' of his State educationally, you may say. And I dunno but that 's the real makin's, after all. We need soldiers on occasions like to-morrow, for instance, but God knows we need statesmen all the time. Yes, an' stateswomen, too, like your blessed mother."

The young man's eyes deepened with a glow that mothers love.

"For lemme tell you, Elliot Darrow — me what ain't no soldier an' sailor, too — lemme say, even in war, it 's human bein's that counts, an' not earthworks. One man with a mind 'fore Lee's old breastworks there at Cold Harbor is stronger 'n all their rock and mud fortressin' an' intrenchmentin'."

"So he be not a coward, Coke?"

"Yes, yes, so 's he hain't no coward," Wren agreed.

"Say," he continued, absently, "Rosalind St. Felix is gone to be a army nurse down South in a hospital. Nice little girl, an' a borned nurse, too. By the way, I 'most forgot a message I had for you. Sorter sad message, maybe, but you 're used to sad things."

Elliot waited.

"Beth Lamond, she said tell you the locket could n't never go back on the chain no more, 'cause the chain 's gone. Said you 'd understand. Said she 's wanted to tell you for 'most a year, ever sence last summer some time, but had n't no heart to do it. Said she 'd write an' explain, an' she knowed it would be all right some time."

Coke deliberated in his delivery, for he knew he was hurting something, and his was the healing, not the hurting, gift."

"Say, who d' you suppose I see back by a stone fence as I came down, clear 'way back to where the Rebs is intrenched?"

"I don't know," Elliot answered, vacantly, as if he had not heard the question.

The waters of the little brook gurgled on their way to the Chickahominy Creek, and the Chickahominy slipped down to the James River, and the James at low tide ran into the sea. And brook, and creek, and river, and sea, and sky, and air, and land, and life seemed all one thing to Elliot Darrow, and that one thing a blank.

"You 'd never guess, so I 'll tell you. It was his Excellency, B. Penwin, erstwhile stealer of Delaware Injuns' horses, an' crimes an' deeds unforgivable, what he ain't caught up for yit. And speakin' of Injuns, Pelathe got run down last winter. Put up a stiff fight to the last. Never was a braver scout ner truer man, but the tricky Rebel Cherokees killed him."

Still Elliot was silent.

"I want to know who's them men marching yonder; lock-steppin' it off fer fun? They hain't Unions, be they?"

The young man looked in the direction Wren was pointing.

"Oh, they are three of our Missourians — not much to look at, but true blue. Some of the noblest men I know come out of that State. You can't measure men by their beauty, Coke Wren. Nor women, either," he added, bitterly.

If the little Yankee understood, he gave no sign.

"You don't know them, Elliot? They are the three cusses that helt up Beth Lamond and my chicken in the ravine beyont the Wakarusa in '55. I got their record all to a finish when I was waitin' fer things in, an' outside of, Lecompton jail. You remember, Craig saved the women."

"Oh, yes!" Elliot remembered that.

"Well, I'll tell you more. Them three high-born patriots is the same you took in out of the cold that same night afterwards. You was singin' to Joe that night, he was down with pneumony, an' they'd come to kill you. The power of your voice turned their murderin' bullets away. Remember that Palmyry preacher said you'd win a battle with that voice of your'n. What was you singin', anyhow?"

Elliot was sitting with his arms clasped round his knees, looking at the little brook. Now he turned to Coke Wren and the same smile that had always won him friends lighted his face.

"I remember it all now. They did act queer. I thought they were drunk. And so they had come to kill, had they?"

Then he leaned forward and, pushing the dark curls

from his brow, he sang softly but sweetly, with the same bird-like clearness as of old:

> There's a wideness in God's mercy
> Like the wideness of the sea,
> There's a kindness in His justice,
> There is more than liberty.

"I wish I could win that easily to-morrow," he said, and, springing up, he strode away toward the camp. For the song had brought a momentary balm of peace to his smitten spirit.

The night was very dark. Beyond the Confederate sentinel line, a man in official Rebel uniform and a rough-looking soldier in Union blue were holding council in the shelter of an earth entrenchment. The officer was fair of face and finely built, and at first glance did not differ from other finely built, fair-faced men who commanded magnificent armies of able men of the South. But the daylight would have shown a Judas face, where treachery and evil had left their cunning imprint to be read by him who has learned the art of reading Judas faces.

"You will be safe enough, Bill," he of the uniform explained. "I've fixed our sentinel here. Come to this beat when you get back. Watch your chance for the Union sentinel. Your clothes will carry you far. Now go."

"Tell me, Colonel," Bill said, sullenly. "I've did an' did for you. I've a notion,—every feller has some time, you know,—that this is my last job for you or anybody. Why d'ye spend money like water an' take such risks, or make me take 'em, for such trifles? You paid me big to get this here little gold chain out o' Lawrence to you. Now, you offer me 'most any price to git it over there."

The officer looked at his servant.

"I hope not your last job," he said, kindly. "I have several more for you myself yet. But you've been true to me, Bill. There's just one thing I want to do. My daughter will marry a Quaker. She is of the soft, pliant kind that will smile and smile and in the end have her own way. My baby boy, Tarleton, your accursed gang took in that boys' camp at Lawrence. How could I know he'd be there? I couldn't go back to him."

Maybe the face of Neil Merriford, as he had looked at the Hole in the Rock, came back a moment to this man in authority. If it did, God's vengeance must have been heavy.

"Bill, I've just one act I must carry through. I've pledged myself to see my son, all I have — and I haven't him, 'tis true — to see him happy with a girl he loves. In this way only can I atone for my sister's broken heart, for — a love interrupted. I'll pay you anything to help me through. I'll give anything for one atonement. If I can make my boy happy, won't that pay back at least a part of things I took away — things Lucy lost?"

The wages of sin! What a sum they exact from him who breaks the law! And Bill, fearful for himself, and despising the man no bigger than himself, went on his errand, cast down with the presentiment that it was to be his last job.

The night was still dark. The Union sentinel had just turned on his beat, when a step, so soft and near it could not be distinguished from his own footfall, took his warm track. Another stride of the sentinel, and a second footfall brought the invader in Union blue one step inside the lines. Three, four, five strides of the sentinel. Then the man inside leaped like a panther toward the sleeping soldiers. The sentinel halted and

listened, but the sounds were only like the light feet of a dog, and he turned and paced his beat like a good soldier.

Elliot Darrow did not sleep well that night. How could he? The night was hot and moist and oppressive, and Elliot's head was hot and his pulse-beat oppressive, and drops of moisture settled on his brow. Soldier life had given even clearer vision to his wonderful eyes, and he saw as well in the dark as many a man could see in the cloudy daylight. He held himself from restlessness, but he gazed up at the stars in the heavens of midnight blue, and upon the sleeping comrades about him. How many of them all would the morrow require in the building of a Nation's strong, imperishable wall? If it should be his turn now, somehow it didn't seem to matter so much as it would have mattered twenty-four hours before. Be it his to go bravely, anyhow. And then he upbraided himself for his doubts.

"After all, Beth's message can be explained," he said to himself. "She never doubted me in the days when tongues were busy concerning my actions. I can wait for her letter. Since Craig's furlough he has tried by a hundred tricks to make me think that Beth has changed her mind. I won't believe it."

As he lay motionless, thinking at last only of the great void in his life the loss of Beth would create, he was suddenly conscious of a presence near. He had been awake so long and his sight was so keen, he saw easily what went on about him. Craig lay near him, sleeping soundly. But the sense of a waking presence quickened. Then a figure slipped by him, a soldier in blue clothes, who bent above Craig. The light fell through the branches directly on Craig's face. And as the soldier stooped to waken him, Elliot caught sight of

the man's countenance. It was the face of Bill the Coward, who had run from Nethercote's burning stable the day he had rescued Mrs. Nethercote, and from himself and Mark and White Turkey, before the Darrow cabin, when the raiders had come to "kill the biggest one."

"Come out here. I've got a message from a Rebel officer, and I want to take one to his headquarters from your camp. I've fooled the sentinel and come through the lines. Come quick," the soldier whispered.

Craig rose lightly as a cat, and the two slipped away.

Elliot rose also to follow or give the alarm. Then he lay down again and watched. In a few moments the man slid off into the darkness, and Craig again lay down beside his wakeful comrade.

"I'll not chase that Rebel spy," Elliot thought. "Let 'Bill' go. A bullet can find a coward in one place just as easily as another. And for this man," he looked at Craig, "I'll not report him to Colonel Lamond. I'm not that kind of a coward."

In a few minutes the sentinel's cry of "Halt!" reached Elliot's ears, a sound of hurrying feet that did not halt, and the quick report of a rifle. Then all was still, for Bill had finished his last job.

Presently, two Missouri men rose from their places and slid into the shadows in the direction of the rifle shot. It was long before they returned. In the next day's charge, Elliot did not note the new-made grave over which he stumbled — the nameless mound that covered all that was earthly of the Coward, Bill.

Before the morning reveille, Elliot, wakeful still, noticed a soiled tissue-paper package lying on Craig's breast, as if it had slipped from his pocket as he slept. Peeping from the torn wrappings were the links of the

quaintly wrought gold chain he had given in pledge to Beth. He could have taken it easily without Craig's knowing it, but it had no value to him now. The force of the message Coke Wren had brought came down like a blow upon him, and the sorrow of that hour was a thing he never forgot.

"I'll not disgrace myself, nor do anything to grieve her," he thought at last. "If she has changed, she has changed. The Scotch lass's endurance was not like the Quaker's patience. But what do I get, except revenge, if I try to steal from him what I have already given away?"

Elliot rose, and as he hurried away he met his Colonel, David Lamond.

"Will he always think he has rescued his daughter from a coward? It makes little difference now. But duty does not fail. A man must do a man's part in the battle of life," Elliot said, as he buckled on his armor for the struggle of the new day. But the look of insolent triumph which Craig's face had worn since his furlough the summer before seemed almost unbearable now.

It was the memorable first day of June, 1864. The Rebel Army, under General Lee, was entrenched with tremendous strength behind its fortifications at Cold Harbor, and the Army of the Potomac was drawn up in battle line before it. Grant had hammered his path through merciless slaughter and appalling disaster past the Wilderness and Spottsylvania; and now that stern warrior, who counted ends, not means, had given the word to move on Cold Harbor.

In all Grant's command, no man more nearly reflected his spirit and military concepts than the stern Scotchman, Colonel David Lamond, of Kansas. This morning Lamond rode near to Elliot Darrow. The young color-

bearer had never faltered in his duty. To-day Lamond knew would be a terrible one. Would the boy from the Vinland Valley meet the fire of a conflict fiercer than any he had yet known? The Colonel did not believe he could do it.

An orderly touched Elliot's shoulder.

"The Colonel wants to speak to you."

Elliot came forward and saluted Beth's father.

"Darrow," Lamond said, "to-day will be a hot one. It's the business of the color-bearer to keep the flag afloat."

"Yes, sir." Another salute from the color-bearer. But each man knew the other's thoughts.

"I'll keep the flag flying for its own grand name — not mine. My country is my sweetheart now," Elliot thought, as he remembered the silk handkerchief of Lamond plaid that he had carried for three years, wrapped around a sweet girl-face painted in a locket.

The charge began. A hurricane of forces hurling itself against impregnable Rebel walls. A surge of Death sweeping back over the breastworks, blotting out men as a reaper cuts down standing grain. In the books of American history the records tell that no other fifteen minutes of time, in all our annals of bloody warfare, ever saw such a return tide of slaughter as that which poured out from the Rebel strongholds of Cold Harbor on that June day, engulfing the Union battle line before it.

In the face of such swift and stupendous peril, what could men do but flee? The Union line wavered, filtered off a little, a little more, then broke, then shattered into fragments, and the rout began.

Over their earthworks came a seething flood of Confederate forces, crashing in swirling torrents down upon

the madly rushing, disorganized lines. And the Rebel yell, the warwhoop of disunion, rent the air with its shrill and vengeful discord. Colonel Lamond saw his command weaken, then scatter and flee, each man for himself, running whithersoever he could for safety. And the brave man's grief and shame and anger were unbounded. Before him, Craig Penwin, tall and lithe, sprang with a leopard's swiftness, followed by hundreds, to whom he shouted:

"Run, boys, run for your lives!"

Above the fleeing mass, the flag the Scotchman loved was swinging as the color-bearer fled. Lamond saw all this, and his soldier-heart was broken.

Louder roared the Rebel yell, and fiercer came the onslaught, as the defensive forces drove headlong the bands of boys in blue.

The engagement was in a woodland of thin timber, with scanty underbrush. In a small clearing, the rout swept by a tiny cabin, a rude log thing, till now the habitation of some poor negro. At its corners the logs projected unevenly, making a rough angle. Elliot Darrow came with the tide into this open space and on beside the cabin. The mind can act more quickly than bullets can speed. In the instant, he remembered Mark's Darrarat of the pioneer boyhood days in the Vinland Valley, and how often the boys had raced to see who could reach the top first. Quick as a flash, too, the dark, thin face of the Palmyra preacher came up before him where there was least need for preachers' faces, and again he heard the prophecy:

"You'll win a battle yet with the power of your voice."

It was all an instantaneous mental process. In the chaos of forces, Colonel Lamond looked upon the retreat-

ing soldiers with an agony no other grief could give. Then he saw the color-bearer pause. Swift as a squirrel, Elliot ran to the little cabin. With hand and foot, he clawed his way, like a squirrel, up the rough angle of the corner and stood upon the eaves.

The troops were rushing still in wild disorder, and the Rebel yell still filled the air as the oncoming legions of the enemy swarmed after them. Lamond saw Darrow springing up the oblique slope to the comb of the clapboard roof. Was the coward expecting to hide there from his foes? Oh, God be thanked, no, no! He was standing upright, with his face toward the enemy. In his right hand the red, white and blue of Old Glory was gleaming in the June sunlight. Knotted to the staff below the last stripe was the silken handkerchief of the Lamond plaid, his Colonel's colors. A moment he stood outlined against the wood and sky, a target for all guns. Then, lifting high the flag he bore, and swinging it out in all its graceful folds of beauty, he challenged his retreating comrades. Above the Rebel yell, there came a burst of song, clear, rich, powerful,—the voice of a hero unafraid:

> We'll rally round the flag, boys,
> We'll rally once again,
> Shouting the battle cry of freedom.
> We will rally from the hillsides,
> We'll gather from the plains,
> Shouting the battle cry of freedom.

At the first notes, swelling out so proud and strong above the roar of battle, the fleeing soldiers turned. Beyond them stood the daring Quaker, his bosom to the foe, his white face illumined with power, his great dark eyes glowing with loyalty, the dark masses of hair thrown back from his brow, and aloft in his strong right

hand the flag of a glorious Union; while rolling out in melody over the thunder of conflict, the rattle of rifle shot, and the fierce yells of battle, came the grand old chorus:

> The Union forever, hurrah, boys, hurrah,
> Down with the traitors! Up with the stars!
> While we rally round the flag, boys, rally once again,
> Shouting the battle cry of Freedom.

Then David Lamond saw the Miracle of Song.

The soldiers were coming back, with three Missouri men in the lead. The forces were converging, the companies were forming. The battle line of boys in blue, with the log cabin in the center, was flung across the track of the charging Rebels. Thicker and fiercer came the return tide, and the Rebels wavered now. The charge, the roar of musketry, the closing in of ranks, then the forward swing, and the Rebels were on the run. Over the fallen ones they fled, and on to their entrenchments, gathering momentum with their speed, they did not stop again till, safe behind their fortified guns, they turned at bay. And the Union line failed not, but held firm until the day's operations were ended. The battle had been saved by the power of song.

In the midst of its wildest strife, where the tides beat fiercest, David Lamond found Elliot with the colors flying above him.

"My boy," the Colonel cried, "you are most fit, most noble! I'm proud to have lived to see this day!"

"A color-bearer's business is to keep the flag afloat," the Quaker answered, with a soldierly salute.

In military annals the outcome of that day was marked indecisive. The Rebel stronghold was not taken, and the Union army did not lose ground. But the carnage of that day was appalling. Its numbers brought regret

even to Grant's stern heart. When the tattered record was made up at roll call, listed among the missing were the names of the two Vinland Valley boys — one of whom had run for his life that day; the other was he whose courage in the crucial moment of direst peril had turned the tide of battle back upon the pursuing foe, and with the miracle of song had rebuilt the broken columns into a wall of strength.

CHAPTER XXVIII

FROM MARAH TO HOREB

And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land, springs of water; in the habitation of dragons where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And the ransomed of the Lord shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

— Isaiah.

"YOU cowardly deserter! You've got caught up with at last. We've knowed all these years you'd never stick it out. Just got in love with a pretty girl, and went to war to please her pa. You never had no principles, you ornery cuss."

These words, with much swearing, Elliot Darrow heard on the edge of a thicket-filled hollow, when the engagement of the day was still raging fiercely. In another minute he had passed the thicket and was climbing out of the ravine with his comrades on the run toward the point commanded, when, amid the rattle of musketry, he heard his own name called imploringly:

"Elliot Darrow, save me! save me!"

The color-bearer halted, for he knew the voice. Pushing through the bushes, he came upon the three Missourians. Beside them lay the half-naked body of a dead Rebel soldier, and crouching on the ground, covered by the guns of the Missouri men, was Craig Penwin. He was partially clad in Rebel gray garments he had taken from the dead man, and his face was pallid. To

Elliot, who had seen many ashy faces that day, the gray color on Craig's countenance meant nothing. The thing about Craig that made him hardly recognizable to his old-time acquaintance was the changed expression. No longer the old insolent self-possession and pride showed there; but shame and fear and abject pleading were written on his countenance.

"What's all this, men?" Elliot asked. "What are you trying to do, Craig?"

"He's tryin' to get on that poor devil's clothes, and make a sneak to the other side, the white-livered deserter. The Rebels is just across that next ravine," one of the Missourians declared.

"Yes, we caught him just in time," another of the three asserted; "and we're goin' to march him straight to Colonel Lamond's headquarters, and give him up. Maybe we're only gittin' even for a trick he played us once, but he never was nothin', anyhow,—half blue an' half gray, like them Reb pants he's got on with his blue coat, the dirty coward!"

"He'll be shot for a deserter the minute old Lamond lays claws on him. The Colonel don't wait none. I've seen too many of 'em go not to know that."

And Craig and Elliot knew the same thing.

"Save me, Elliot. You know these men. Spare my life," he implored, with hands outstretched toward the young Quaker.

So White Turkey had lifted his hands in imitation of this very moment. On the wintry night, in the shadows of the old Trail, the Delaware had faced Craig Penwin with the accusation of the Southerner's willingness to do the Quaker boy harm. And White Turkey had cried prophetically to the proud young man:

"You cannot harm him. Some day you lift up hands

to Darrow, so. You beg him spare your life, you dog. I've said truth."

For a little space Elliot hesitated. Love is overmastering. And Elliot had lived all day on the joy of having conquered the Scotchman's prejudice. But he remembered the gold chain in Craig's bosom, and he remembered a sweet face crowned with golden hair, the love-lit gray eyes, and the Madonna expression when the baby had cuddled in loving arms on the day of the double funeral, long ago. For her dear sake, the man must live. Elliot fought and won the hardest battle of his life — a bloodless battle of loving sacrifice.

"Boys, let him go. What do we gain by fighting one another? Nobody knows who's turn will be next. Get up, Craig, and for God's sake be a man."

"The young feller's right, boys. Our turn's coming soon. Let's let him go this once," the third Missourian urged. "Git up and walk a soldier's gait now, or you'll git caught soon enough."

Craig rose in humility and confusion. Disgrace cuts deep into a nature like his, and his degradation was complete.

A shower of bullets fell about the group as a detachment of Rebel soldiers swept down the hollow. The delay for Craig's sake had been a dangerous one for Elliot Darrow. Rebel forces swung around them, and the rifles poured out their deadly charges.

One man, the one who had agreed to Elliot's entreaty for mercy, now fell under the fire of the enemy, and in an instant more he, too, was before a Bar of Justice. But as this was his last word on earth, might not the merciful hope to obtain mercy?

The second Missourian, nearer to the Union forces than the others, sprang back with a bound and dived

into the thicket. Soon he had scrambled out of reach and was on a dead run for his company. In the race, he turned to see if the others were with him. They were beyond the ravine,— Elliot, Craig, and one Missourian,— surrounded and captive to the Rebels.

"I done my best, Colonel," the man explained to David Lamond, as soon as he could gain an audience that night, "but the odds was dead on us. Darrow would n't have been caught, but he stopped at Penwin's begging for mercy. And I reckon he did save the cowardly deserter's life. Darrow 's a grand feller. Never hope to see nothin' better in heaven 'n that picture he made up against the trees an' piece of blue sky when he swung the flag overhead an' called us all to rally round it. Oh, holy Moses! but now, did n't he sing!"

"But he 's caught now; and he had stopped to save young Penwin from what he deserved." David Lamond's mind ran back over the life of his young Quaker neighbor, and the revelation of his own admiration, held back so many years, broke upon him now with a crushing force. He recalled Hiram Darrow's words on the day the two were arrested for treason and had started off to the Lecompton prison: "Craig Penwin will need my family more than they will ever need him." The words had become a prophecy. "I would n't have thought it of Craig," he added sadly.

"Maybe not, Colonel, but I would, and I 'll tell you somethin' else maybe nobody 'd thought. In that squad that got the three, Boniface Penwin was leadin' 'em. And I 'll tell you somethin' more than that. Me and my two mates slipped out for mercy's sake and buried our old Wakarusa partner, Bill. Excuse me, Colonel, we 're human even if we did come out of Missouri."

The Colonel smiled. "Some of the best men our

country possesses are from Missouri. The State's all right. Be proud of it. It's just the few who give it a bad name. The same is true of Kansas. And a bad name smells so far, it taints all who are near it. Go on."

"Well, we buried Bill, as I said," the man continued. "But we got to him 'fore he died. And he told us his errand. Made a clean breast of it to us. It was his last show to do right. He said he'd come to bring word from the Colonel to Craig that if the battle got too hot Craig was to run for it and git into their lines somehow and they'd care for him, and afterward pretend he'd been captured, and it wa n't to make no difference in his good name with you. Said for him to git on part of some dead Reb's clothes, and each side'd think he belonged to them. Colonel Boniface Penwin's got only one good failin'. That's his interest in Craig."

"He is the boy's father," Lamond said sadly. And the Missourian went on:

"Craig was savin' himself at the last. That's the way with a selfish man. The boy was darin' enough back in Kansas, but war tries the last one of us clean to the bone. An' if they's a mite of coward in us, it's comin' out then. He just could n't measure up to a brave man's size. When it comes to marchin' and fightin' steady, an' never flinchin' till the end comes, lots of 'em's that way."

"No, he fell short. But Darrow did not fail. Heaven keep him safe. I thought he was missing," the Colonel murmured.

Meanwhile the three captive soldiers were given unusual consideration for the remainder of that day. When evening came, they were conducted into the presence of Colonel Penwin and other officials, Craig still wearing his gray pantaloons and blue coat.

The Missourian was sent at once to join a squad of prisoners who were on their way to a Southern prison.

"Lemme have a word with this feller, won't you?" he begged of Penwin, and the Colonel, who still had a gentleman's manners, allowed his request.

Out of earshot, but under guard, he spoke.

"Darrow, me and the boys buried that spy, Bill, that come in after young Penwin last night. Say, d'ye know what he come for?"

"You told me to-day to plan for Craig to desert and yet not seem to desert," Elliot answered.

"Yes, an' to give him a little gold chain he'd stole out of the hands of a pretty girl in the Quantrill raid last August. Said he was paid to git it by Colonel Penwin, and luck favored him. She had it in her hands ready to put on, I s'pose, and dropped it and run out to see what their infernal hullabaloo was all about when they went tearin' into Lawrence. And he swoops down like a hawk later an' makes the old nigger woman git it for him while the girl was off givin' warnin' to save men. And he brings it clear here to sneak into Craig's hands. Bill was to say the girl sent it herself as a token of good-will; kind of keepsake; and when she was free again for him to come back. Old Penwin planned it all, but that Shawnee scout tracked him and heard it. He told the girl a raider got it. Now, what the devil could Craig do with a gold chain, d'ye reckon?"

"Nothing with that one if he lived a thousand years," and the smile on Elliot Darrow's face belied the notion that any power could call him a prisoner any more. In the breast pocket of his blue coat he carried the silk handkerchief and the locket. He could find another chain.

Craig was sent away under guard which Elliot knew

was a mere pretense, but he wondered much at the mixed uniform which the guard carelessly allowed to stay unchanged.

"Which way will he turn, blue or gray?" Elliot wondered. But his own time came now.

Penwin sent all the other men from his tent and sat alone with the young Quaker. After deliberation, he spoke.

"Elliot Darrow, I have just one word for you." How like to the Colonel Penwin of the Vinland Valley he seemed. Aristocratic, arrogant, unconquerable; even his voice brought echoes of the homeland.

"If you had escaped, I should have followed a different course. Now, I shall not. I have no fear of any attempt any one of you might ever make against me. I mean any one of you Kansas men, St. Felix, Merriford, or yourself. Merriford will let matters alone. St. Felix was reported missing at the Wilderness last month. I heard later it was a false report, but no matter. He 'll never trouble me."

"He is a good man wherever he is," Elliot said.

Colonel Penwin frowned and continued tersely:

"I say this to you. I can give you your freedom, or send you to Andersonville."

"Well?" Elliot's dark eyes were fixed on the Colonel, and in them he saw again the accusing eyes of his cousin, Neil Merriford.

"If you will promise me to renounce all claim to Elizabeth Lamond and leave the way clear for my son to press his suit with her, you can go to Grant's camp under safe conduct, and fight or run as suits your fancy. Miss Lamond's promise is given to you. I heard it upon the bluff by the old Trail one April evening long ago. I was passing at the time. That was mere child's fancy. Much

as that beautiful woman loves my son, for they've been engaged really since last year at the time of his furlough there — she feels bound by her old promise, unless you will release her."

Colonel Penwin dropped his eyes that the Union soldier might not see the cunning look he could not hide.

"You are an honorable fellow. I have always respected your integrity. My boy has now the gold chain Elizabeth gave him last summer in pledge of love. You will not keep her to her word. Promise me now that you renounce your claim. Do you know what Andersonville is? It is hell. You'll never come out of that prison alive. Think of that beautiful woman, your mother. Promise me."

There was command and threat and petition all mingled in Boniface Penwin's tones, and his face was gray with the intensity of his passion. The young soldier, helpless in his hands, looked out on life and freedom on the one hand, and on imprisonment and death on the other. How long will a Quaker's patience endure? So long as a Scotch lassie's strength fails not. Then he spoke.

"Boniface Penwin, if you think you have it in your power to save me from prison and yet, before you exercise your power, you demand me to give up my right to the hand of a girl all my own,"— his eyes were flashing proudly now,—"let me tell you that the imprisonment of a free man is better than the freedom of a coward. I can suffer for my country. I will not give up anything that is mine to keep to save myself from any prison bond that you or the whole Confederacy may lay upon me. You have my answer."

So Elliot Darrow was ticketed for Andersonville, but the machinery of warfare moves slowly for the captives.

It was almost a month before the Quaker soldier reached the stockade prison.

In the late June time the broad Kansas prairies are all an emerald sea, the heaviest foliage is on the woodland, the streams run fullest from the rains of the early summer, and over everything sweeps the soft light breeze bearing the wine of life from sunlit spaces void of all miasma. It was in these crowning days of the year's rich beauty that Elliot Darrow with many other comrades was thrust into prison for the crime of loyalty to the flag of his country. As the prisoner's train bore him southward into the heart of the red clay lands and pitch-pine forests of Southern Georgia, he began to understand the slave's horror of being sold "down the river."

Elliot's boyhood had been spent in the thriving prosperity of a Quaker village in Indiana. His young manhood was on the Kansas border, where each day in the Vinland Valley was like a rent, a sword thrust, a shifting of all settled things, as Beth Lamond had said. His college days were in the halls of Haverford, where ideals of citizenship and high scholarly standards combine. The post-graduate course of Civil War had trained him with the development found in the curriculum of no other school. Inwrought into his character was the influence of his father's guidance and his mother's strength; the love of a pure-hearted girl; the association of Dr. St. Felix, and Winthrop Merriford and other Lawrence men who measured large in mental and moral girth, and wielded the affairs of a State according to their own measure; and the stern loyalty of Colonel Lamond demanding nothing short of his best self always. He was in the vigor of his years and his physique, pliant and wholesome from outdoor life, was tempered to great

endurance. With clean hands and a pure heart, he came to pay the prisoner's price for the preservation of a Nation's life.

The Andersonville prison, comprising nearly thirty acres, lay in a rectangular form on the side of a red clay slope from which every stick of growing timber had been removed. Around the entire rectangle was a stockade of hewn logs driven into the ground and projecting upward eighteen feet, making an impassable wall about the open space within. Outside of this barrier, sentry boxes were placed at intervals of eighty feet. Here the guard kept hourly vigil that no man might climb the wall and escape alive. Sixteen feet inside the enclosure was a low railing, hardly two feet high, parallel with the entire wall surrounding it. A small sluggish creek banked by low marshy borders ran through the lower part of the prison from the west to the southeast. A bridge had been constructed across this creek some distance from where it entered the stockade on the west. The prison had been designed for the incarceration of ten thousand men. On the June morning when Elliot Darrow was brought hither and thrust inside its timbered enclosure, there were thirty thousand men swarming up and down its sun-boiled spaces.

The day was intensely hot, and the humid air was almost unbearable. No breath of breeze gave any relief to its oppressive weight. Elliot was worn and feverish from travel in crowded prison cars, and he welcomed the end of the journey. Inside the gates he stopped to stretch his limbs and get his bearings, and seek the nearest shelter for rest, and maybe a minute's seclusion. God made the solitude for man's healing balm.

Elliot had thought of the stockade prison as a relief

from walled cells. Before him, in the untempered glare of heat blaring down through heavy, steamy air, lay a great sandy tract slivered across with hot red clay. Not a line of shade was between the bare foul earth below and the brazen furnace of scalding heat above. The eyeballs ached at the sight of it all. What a Godsend one single tree would have been. But in rain or frost or sweltering downpour of sunlight, the prison was an unroofed inferno, and those who had dared to strike for Old Glory must take what came of Nature's cruelty.

Before the band of captives had neared the stockade, the stench arising from within had been sickening. Inside the walls the sinks for sanitary drainage along the lower portion of the stream of water, swarming with putrid growths, sent up their foul odors to thicken the hot moist atmosphere. Here thirty thousand men were struggling about in a space of less than thirty acres. Small wonder if the dream of the sweet summer air of the Kansas prairies, and the fancied breath of the cool shadows of the old Trail in the woodsy winding ways above the Vinland Valley should come with their tantalizing, forbidden comfort before the young prisoner; and for the moment, the memory of the wild roses and verbenas on the sides of Mount Oread should taunt him with their perfume.

"Well, I want to know."

Was it an angel's voice in Elliot Darrow's ear? The speaker did not look like a model for a Raphael or a Correggio. A little thin-faced man, whose clothes, soiled to the limit, hung on a shrunken frame. A man with hair uncut and bearded, unshaven face of greasy tan, and hands most grimy. It would take more than a palm or harp to make an angel out of him. But the eyes, little beady black eyes, and the voice — these

belonged to Coke Wren, or to an angel like to him.

"What do you want to know?" There was no sense in Elliot's blank reply, and the two men stood clasped in each other's arms.

"How did you persuade 'em to let you in?" Coke's ruling passion held him still. "You was reported missing after you called the retreat back at Cold Harbor. I thought you was dead, but I was n't expecting to meet up with you in hell for some time yet. I 've been here some spell myself. They say a body can get used to most anything. I 'm makin' the effort of my life to git used to this, but it 's most too extravagant for my imagination."

"It will take heaven a long while to get used to you, Coke Wren, when you get there. You are too good for it."

And the strong man leaned on the little one and wept the tears the limit of endurance only can bring to men's eyes.

"Oh, cry away, Elliot. It 'll do you good. You git it all done the first day you are here, 'n after that you ain't bothered more."

They sat down together on the sun-baked clay, and told each other of their fortunes. About them, unheeded for the time, long-haired men, with bodies begrimed, and ragged clothes be-vermined, starving, desperate men reeled up and down or sat in stolid misery, or lay in deathly illness.

"I got into the service the same night I seen you," Coke explained, "and I seen one hour of fightin' with my Massachusetts men, an' then — you know my tendency to accidents. I got too darin', an' after doin' some little personal damage to some of 'em, I got swept into the dust pan with a lot more an' throwed in here. I

wanted to fight, but when I see what was comin' I just gripped hard onto the Lord Almighty an' I says 'My times is in Your hands. I wanted to work for You, an' could n't. Now it 's Your turn, ef I 'm worth anything to You, You 'll make it plain by keepin' me in the holler of Your hands an' let me be a sort o' comfort to the downcast.' This ain't no place fer Addison's littery productions, ner Pope's 'Essay Onto Man,' but them Psalms your mother read you, an' the everlastin' love of the Man of Galilee, they 's some reality in them things when you 're on the underside of hell an' the whole Confederacy 's settin' on the lid of the bubblin' caldron atop of you."

So Coke talked on, and Elliot, to whom he had come as a miracle of blessing, gathered inspiration from his spirit. Not always are the chosen ones the rich and great and beautiful. In that prison-house of anguish and suffering, Coke Wren was a daily blessing.

"Lemme show you the grounds," the Yankee said after awhile, and together they crept about the dreary spaces.

"What 's that little railing for?" Elliot asked as they approached the side near the little timber railing sixteen feet from the wall, and he made a stride toward it. With a shriek, Coke caught him just in time to drag him backward, and a roar of voices rose round about him. At the same time a rifle ball sent up a cloud of red dust from the clay where he had stood.

"That 's the dead line. Learn it quick," Coke ejaculated.

"The what?" queried Elliot.

"The dead line, boy. It goes clear round the prison inside. Whoever crosses that by accident, or ignorance, or wilful, is to be shot down instantaneous and no chance

to escape. Them sentry boxes is there to hold murderers."

He pointed to the line of cages, each holding its sentinel ready.

"The worst place is the water. Keep close to the bridge an' starve a half a day 'fore you go up to the west side. More men's lost their lives tryin' to git water'n any other way. Lemme show you."

They worked their way through the crowded grounds until they reached the bridge across the creek. Below the bridge the marshy creek banks were trampled into a slime of mud by the feet of the thousands who came here to bathe, or to cast their refuse into the sinks. In the small space between the bridge and the dead line on the West the stream was reserved for drinking and cooking uses. Here all day and all night the place was crowded with men struggling for their turn to get the water. Warm, muddy, and poisonous as it was, the men were dying of thirst and here they found their only supply. If in the madness to secure it a man was pushed across the fatal dead line, he never came back.

This, then, was the prison life from which Boniface Penwin would keep the Quaker soldier if he would renounce his claim to the hand of Elizabeth Lamond. Into this life Elliot Darrow had voted himself, and he set his teeth and took it up as bravely as he could.

When human beings turn to jungle beasts and prey on others of their kind, then man turns meekly to Him who like as a father pitieth His children.

"Let it be mine to forget myself a little by trying to help somebody else." The longing cry of the young soldier reached far above the stench and sin and sickness and sorrow of that vile prison pen.

As July crept by, he earned the name of Doctor Darrow. True, it was little he could do, for the nothingness

of resource and supplies was the great source of misery there. But his knowledge of anatomy and physiology and medicine gave him a little hold toward helpfulness, and his only solace was the wan smile of some dying man or sick comrade whom he could by his judgment or his kind word relieve a little.

The heat increased with the passing of each blazing July day. The waters diminished and grew more foul. Sickness in every form, smallpox, scurvy, fever, and all bowel ills in deadliest degree were in that camp of Union captives.

The starving ration of raw corn meal, without salt, cooked by each man for himself, or the thin pea-soup, was the only food for men to live upon. There was no soap, no change of clothing, no comb nor razor, no medicine. Vermin crawled over the ground in swarms, flies and maggots abounded, and the contact of disease polluted all the place.

And still the July sun knew no mercy for these forsaken ones. The death-rate crawled up to two hundred eighty every twenty-four hours. And all the time the cry for "Water! Water!" went up to the glaring heavens, and still the polluted stream with its thick coating of scum, hot and foul, poisoned men famishing with thirst.

With these awful forces of destruction daily wearing out the captives, came the devil and his temptations. Throughout the camp, reaching to its every corner, a word was sent, — the message from the North. It declared that these men of Andersonville, so starved and sick and useless now, were repudiated by the Union powers, and the great-hearted President at Washington. It said there would be no trading of fat, sleek Rebel prisoners able to fight again for men unfit for service if they were free. The North needed men, not cadavers,

and hope of exchange must be abandoned. How could the captives doubt this? No line of a letter, or newspaper, no voice from the outside world could reach them. Thirty thousand men, with less than two feet of wood between themselves and freedom, were held dying, famishing for food and water, and ignorant all the while of what was going on in the land. Truly, the mental starvation told not less than the physical hunger.

And the devil came in another dress, for his wardrobe is both large and varied.

"Look at them notices of 'modified allegiance,'" Coke Wren drawled, feebly. He could not stand now from weakness. "Tell me what they say."

Elliot read the temptation written up for all the captive Union men to meet.

To every man who would promise to lay down arms and fight no more for the Star-spangled Banner, freedom and safe conduct to his home.

He need not be loyal to the South. He need not lift a finger in its defence. All that was asked was that the oath be taken to add no more fighting strength to the Union cause.

Poor starved and dying wretches, shut up from the world, forgotten by the Powers you serve! The gates are waiting to be flung wide open and freedom and safety and home are just beyond you. Only say the word; lift up your thin right hands to heaven and swear no more to defend Old Glory, and all these are yours.

And did they lift up thin right hands and forswear the flag they loved? Did they? From among the fifty thousand men imprisoned here in the time of Andersonville's power, twenty-six, just twenty-six, took oath and freedom. The remainder of the fifty thousand, though they died by the thousands, or lived on in misery, swore

not. But loyal still they held their right as men to fight and die like men for the banner of their country.

> And how can man die better
> Than facing fearful odds
> For the ashes of his fathers,
> And the temples of his Gods?

The burning July day was drawing to a close, the day of fiercest heat and intensest suffering that the prison camp had known. All day long the cry for "Water! Water!" had rent the air. Many that day gave up the struggle and found the fountains of living water beside the tree that bear twelve manner of fruit whose leaves are for the healing of the nation. But thousands were less fortunate, and the hours of the long, blistering afternoon dragged by. Another day like this, men could not endure. Surely, the cross laid on them would break them now. And the sunset flamed out in angry fire, and the green stinking stream shrunk under the blazing fury.

A word went whispering up and down the ranks of pallid men. Wild-eyed, unkempt, tattered and filthy fellows they were, but Union men still, and true to their colors.

There will be a prayer meeting at six o'clock. A prayer meeting! Yes, men give up prayer the last of all renunciations. Prayer meetings there had been many, but tonight the word:

"We must pray for water. 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I give.' In His name ask for water."

The leading man who took that word about was the tall, dark-faced preacher who had held the spirits of the Palmyra people up to the call of a great sacrifice. True to his teachings, he had fought and suffered for the

Nation and its people. In this prison pen he was a comforter to the stricken ones, and he oftenest, maybe, closed the dying eyes.

The word went up and down. "Let us pray for water."

And all the while the poison stuff slid slimily down the bottom of the creek bed.

Six o'clock, and over the acres of men, a picture of woe our Nation will never have to see again, over the sick, and those who tried to minister to them, fell the spirit of prayer. All over the wide foul camp groups of men stood with bowed heads, while other men prayed in devoted companies. And the prayer was for God's merciful gift of water, a wail of human need to Him whose are the waters of the earth.

Night fell and the humid heat knew no surcease. No ripple of cool evening breeze stirred the dead calm of that fetid place. Low in the west a silent black bank of cloud was rising. It swept up slowly, majestically, sublimely. It was shot through with lurid shafts of lightning. Then the first faint roll of thunder, like the roll of cannon, fell upon the ear. And then the thunder began to boom. The play of lightning grew fiercer and louder rolled the heaven's cannonade, until a crashing of tremendous bursts of sound, a constant blinding blaze of light, a screaming wind, and all the powers of the heavens went mad in the wild storm of that July night.

Under its terrific beating, the unsheltered men lay prone. All forces had power to buffet them. And God seemed far away, or reaching down to earth only in his wrathful chariot of storm fury.

Elliot Darrow lay beside Coke Wren. Beyond him was the same Missouri man who long ago had sought his life.

"We'll get up early, Coke," Elliot said, "and get you up to the creek so you can have the best drink."

"That we will," the Missourian declared.

"I ain't worth it, boys. Let the big men drink first," Coke urged. "A Yankee is pretty much of a salt fish, anyhow."

The gray dawn came at last. The storm had cooled the air. Out in the world the pine trees gleamed with raindrops in the first light of morning. Clearer grew the day and sweeter the air for a brief time, while the dead odors lay flat to earth. Down to the creek the men came crowding with drawn faces, longing for water, even for that slimy liquid. The stream was swollen by the midnight storm, and all the filth it held was swimming on the surface. As the men were gathering nearer Elliot, Coke, the Missourian, and the Palmyra preacher made their way toward the creek.

And behold the day of God's miracles come back to earth again!

Not far from the creek on the side of the slope an effort had been made to dig a well and the effort had failed. This morning out of the place a stream of sweet, pure, clear water was gushing joyously, as if it knew the life-giving power and gladness it would bring. No pause, no stay, no diminishing in its volume, it poured without money and without price for the parched fever-smitten captives.

Elliot Darrow gave a shout.

"Water! water! Come get water!"

The next man caught up the cry, and the next, and the next. And soon from length to length of that great prison pen the shout arose, a mighty voice of surprise and exultation.

"Water! water! God has sent us water."

Then down in that desolate Georgian prison camp there came a sight the like of which no other land may ever know. Beside the gushing crystal waters, free gift of God to loyal men, stood Elliot Darrow, his tall form in the dawning light outlined against the western stockade, the glow of the morning on his thin, gaunt face and great dark eyes, his long hair in a mat of curls tangled about his brow. But the smile that lighted his countenance was as joyous as of yore in the little Darrarat beside the old Trail. Lifting up his voice, he sang as he had never sung before. And up from all the camp came the voice of thousands of men who sang with him in one grand hymn of gratitude.

> Praise God from whom all blessings flow.
> Praise Him, all creatures here below.
> Praise Him above, ye Heavenly host,
> Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

And the day of God's miracles failed not to the sons of men, even to the closing hours of the Civil War in America.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE LOCKET AND THE CHAIN

The prophet Ezekiel has written that, fronting to eastward, stands
A house, from under whose threshold the waters pour, healing all lands.
The fishermen of Engedi spread their nets and rejoice, day by day,
The trees on its banks never wither, the deserts with blossoms are gay,
And so may we write of this Kansas,—a house fronting still to the sun;
So long as its sons and its daughters shall do as their fathers have done,
While the Kaw runs to the Missouri, the Missouri runs on to the sea,
The throb of the blossom-starred prairies, the pulse of the world shall be.
And the limit no man shall measure for the end is Eternity.

WHEN CRAIG PENWIN was sent under safeguard from his father's tent, his anger burst forth, and upon his father's head he heaped his wrath. He believed his guards would lead him wherever he chose. He believed, too, that Elliot and one Missourian were safely out of his way, and that one Missourian was dead. Fate had let the third man escape and take back the tale of his desertion to Colonel Lamond. Craig knew precisely what that meant.

Now there was no way open before him. To stay in the Rebel camp meant nothing, for his father had fool-

ishly joined the squad sent out to capture Elliot, and as for himself the whole force had caught him deserting. Everything had failed. Craig did not look within to see how he himself, with high instincts and a clear understanding of a man's duty, had come so near to a life's success only to fail through his own selfishness. So he cursed his fate, and roundly he cursed his father for this interference. No pulse-beat of pity had the son for his father whose one love he was, and to whom, for his happiness, no sacrifice seemed too great. Selfishness held supreme, and in the dimness of the June twilight he avowed his hatred of Boniface Penwin.

A hundred yards from his father's tent a bullet whistled through the air, striking Craig in the side as he passed.

"Jack Bobbs, you idiot, what are you trying to do?" It was the Atlanta gambler, Roxbury, who cried out as the bullet flew.

"Oh, pickin' off a Union dog that was gittin' too smart, or a Rebel deserter tryin' to get into the Union lines in his blue coat and gray breeches. He was cussin' Colonel Penwin out of his clothin' over somethin'," Bobbs replied.

"Since when did you begin to defend Colonel Penwin? You didn't git the man you was after yet, but you did git his boy. Come on. Come on, we got to wait awhile for that now."

"I don't know why we've got to. I won't hear no Union devil cussin' a Rebel officer an' not shoot him. Was that Penwin's boy? Well, he deserved shootin' for cussin' his daddy," Bobbs replied, and the two disappeared.

Craig fell heavily to the ground, insensible. The pity he had denied his father was at last his own undoing.

When he opened his eyes the next day, he was in the hospital at Richmond and Rosalind St. Felix was bending over him.

Nothing was ever quite so becoming to Rosalind as a nurse's dress. The fine young Southern surgeon who stood near her came forward at her signal. Craig moved in time to see the look that passed between them.

"Rosalind, you here?" he asked, feebly.

"Yes, Craig." Her eyes were full of a happy light, and Craig understood.

"How is it?" he asked the kind-faced surgeon who bent over him.

"Release is near, my boy. Have you any message?"

Craig shook his head.

"Where is Elliot, Craig?" Rosalind asked.

The look of insolent pride came again. It had become the mastering habit.

"In Andersonville, I hope," he said, and closed his eyes.

The next day his nurse found only one keepsake, a gold chain which she recognized, and she pondered much on how he could have gotten it. True, Beth had never spoken of her loss, and in the fright of that awful raid Rosalind forgot the incident of Lucy and Beth and the pretty trinket.

"What shall I do with this?" she asked the young surgeon. It was very dear to a Kansas girl. I can't understand why she should have given it to Craig Penwin."

"Then send it back to the Kansas girl," the surgeon suggested. "She ought to have the final word about it. And between ourselves, Rossie, I have no use for Colonel Boniface Penwin. Nor have his superior officers, I

believe. He's not their kind of a man, it seems to me. I understand this young fellow wouldn't have been shot if the guards had allowed him to change his clothes. But they kept him half blue and half gray out of hatred for his father."

When the September sun was swinging far to the south and Fall was sending the early yellow leaves dead ripe to the earth, the gates of the prison pen at Andersonville opened to admit a small, dark man, dressed in the uniform of a Confederate officer.

"This way, St. Felix," a guard said. "The Kansas men are on the west side generally. They like the West."

Coke Wren and Elliot Darrow sat together in the three square yards of earth they called their home, and Dr. St. Felix walked across the prison toward them.

"I want to know." It was a very feeble voice now. "There's St. Felix. Wonder how they got him in."

Elliot could not smile. His gaunt, sad face appeared to have lost its power to do that any more.

St. Felix saw them, and, self-possessed man that he was, he staggered in his steps.

"Boys! boys!" was all he could say.

"Not much left of us, Doc, but all red, white an' blue under the dirt still," Coke Wren declared.

The doctor grasped a hand of each. "Great God! and you will endure all this for the sake of your flag. No use for the southern armies to fight such men as you any further. I bring you good news. Your commanders, Major Merriford and Colonel Lamond, have managed to get you a free pass out of here." He could not say more, for the eyes of the two were more than he could stand.

"You mean," Elliot said, "that you have done the

biggest part of it. The South never held a grander man than Dr. St. Felix."

"Oh, I'm not much, — small, — you know," the doctor tried to smile.

"Yes, we know darned well about your size," Coke declared.

The three hastened from the place, but not before Elliot had said good-by to many, and joy and regret went with him, for Doctor Darrow was a friend to many.

"I'm glad Missouri is gone, Coke," Elliot said. "He died bravely and we could n't have left him here."

"He's the man Elliot Darrow turned from bein' a murderer to a loyal citizen by singin' to Joe once long ago," Coke explained.

As they pursued their journey northward, they talked of the chances of war and afterward. It seemed impossible that they could ever have been enemies.

"The end is near," St. Felix said. "I shall stay in Richmond. We are beaten now and I'm going to help build up my South shattered by this war. You Kansas men are making the West by your everlasting adherence to your principle of your right to freedom. Its future will be glorious if your sons and daughters value the flag and hold to their loyalty and love of liberty as nobly as their fathers have done. Lincoln has freed the slaves. In my judgment he'll live to regret it, but he's done it. Now, when Richmond goes down — only a few months hence, I know the thing is done. We did our best. But somehow the men who stayed by the old flag had the God of Battles with them, and you can't batter down that kind of a wall."

St. Felix paused and looked at Elliot.

"Rosalind is to be married in October to a young surgeon at the hospital. He just suits her. He is steady

and she is impulsive. I'll stay near them. I hope I can serve my country in its reconstruction, and I know the mettle and power of the West and North, and I value them as few Southern men can."

"You will be a power, doing a noble work wherever you are, Dr. St. Felix," Elliot said. "When I think of the South, I shall remember you. The commander of that beastly prison will come to an infamous end soon enough, and history cannot heap ignominy high enough upon his name, nor bury him too deeply in oblivion. He will be lost. I'm not going to use up strength hating him."

"That's Isabel Darrow speakin' in her boy now. Listen to her," Coke Wren declared, as he looked admiringly at Elliott.

"By the way," St. Felix said, at last. "Our old acquaintance, Colonel Boniface Penwin, did you hear of him?"

"No, we missed several daily papers, owin' to high water down there," Coke drawled out, slowly. "What of B. Penwin?"

St. Felix sighed. "A man's sins rest at last on his own head. Roxbury pursued him to the last, but in the end he took his own life, murdering coward that he was! The last name on his lips was the name of Neil Merriford. A man needs courage to face the enemies' guns, but it takes a coward to face his own gun. He was a gentleman, gone wrong. One evil passion after another he let master him. I knew him when he owned himself. A charming friend he was and a good citizen. But, Elliot, a man must be master of himself to be a Man. Then he's greater than he that taketh a city; greater than General Grant will be when he takes Richmond, unless he can also take and hold General Grant."

Out in the Vinland Valley Patty Wren's "queer feeling in the top of her head" betokened some coming good. With no more reason than a bird could give for flying northward, she flew over to the Darrow home one April morning. "I could n't stay away, 'cause I know they 's joy in the air," she explained to her hostess.

Isabel Darrow's face wore the lines the sorrows of war had carved in, and the silver streakings in her wavy hair were permanent. No mother of a boy in Andersonville prison ever grew younger in face and heart. But noble living brings enduring charm. The steadfast, intellectual, God-fearing life of this Quaker home filled all the passing years with beauty.

"Yes, Patty, there is joy on earth. Richmond has fallen. John Speer brought the word to Hiram over on the other farm this morning. Coke is on his way home, with Jupe to care for him. The doctor says he is doing nicely."

Patty cooed and crowed and clucked in her joy.

"Colonel Lamond and Major Merriford will soon be in Kansas. Joe is already here, but Mark will be stationed in Wyoming for awhile," Isabel went on.

"That 's why Lucy Penwin 's goin' West, bless her heart," Patty cried. "And when 's the doctor to get home again?"

Isabel smiled. "Yes, Lucy is going West," she said "I don't know when Elliot will come home."

"I 'll bet the girl they call 'the beauty of Kansas' knows," Patty chuckled. "This queer feelin' in the top of my head always means somethin' good. My! but I 'd give a cat to see Doctor Darrow walkin' in here. Lemme know when you hear."

"I will surely do that, Patty," Isabel assured her.

October came again to Kansas with all the beauty of

autumn skies and rainbow-tinted prairies. The Vinland Valley swam in the heliotrope haze. The Wakarusa went on its winding way to meet the Kaw. The woods along the shallow draws were purple and scarlet. The breeze, exhilarating as wine, swept in from far sunny plains. The old Santa Fé Trail was yet the broad highway for the feet of men moving Westward to a new land, a wilderness of beauty and promise.

Along the old way where, in the times gone by, the children of three settlers' families had gone nutting in happy, care-free days, Dr. Elliot Darrow and Elizabeth Lamond came again in the bloom of their young manhood and womanhood. On the brow of the bluff above the Vinland Valley, they sat down and looked out in silence at the land over which brooded the smile of Omnipotent Peace and Beneficence.

Then Elliot spoke. The light of his dark eyes was as tender as of old, and in his face was a look of glad expectancy. Beth's dress was of soft gray-green and dark blue, with the white lines threading through it, the colors her father loved. Her golden hair was coiled about her head like a coronet, and her fair face wore the strength of womanly beauty.

"Our ten years of trouble. Beth, do you remember John Brown's promise?"

"Yes, Elliot. The prophecy was that they would come, not that they would stay. The sorrowful things of life do not endure. It is the joy of life that is imperishable."

"How long does a Scotch lassie's strength endure?" he asked, softly, as he turned toward her.

"So long as a Quaker's patience will last," Beth mumured.

Elliot put his arms about her; her golden head nestled

against his shoulder, and all the troubles of the ten years fled away.

"I have a locket of yours, Beth. I've kept it in this handkerchief of the Lamond plaid. I buried it in a little box at Andersonville to keep it clean. I knocked Boniface Penwin down and left him insensible because he tried to take it from me when I was sent to prison. They put me in irons a day and night for it, but I kept the locket and the silken colors, my colors, dearie."

"And I have a gold chain, Elliot. Rosalind sent it to me. She took it from some soldier in the hospital. I suppose the raider who took it from me died there. He was the same man whom Craig Penwin drove out of the ravine during the Wakarusa War. Pelathe told me all about it. You may put the locket on the chain now."

And because Craig's love for this rare woman had been a sincere one, Elliot never explained to her nor put a stain upon his memory.

Beth's face was glorified by love's dear light, as Elliot fastened the locket on the chain, and for these two the way of life opened broadly and fair toward all their years of nobleness and power.

The old Trail is only a memory now. The men and women, the Empire Builders, who half a century ago founded a kingdom on Liberty and Loyalty and Love, and defended it with the strength of their brain and brawn and heart — these men and women are passing now, or have gone hence to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away. And their children, the citizens of a great commonwealth, still tell their children of their own young years, when a wall of men, for the love of freedom, stood round about the

young pioneer State to defend it from its foes. And how these men, trained on the Western prairies, went forth to larger fields and followed the old flag and battled for it and with their brother soldiers saved it at last for themselves and their nation forever.

And the third generation, the children of these pioneers' children, knowing not the landmarks of the old Trail, wander today where patriot feet have stood and martyr blood has poured. They coast down the Big Hill of the old sheltered woodland way in the icy winter weather, and linger by The Hole in the Rock, and gather in the halls of Baker University. They look out in happy carelessness from Mount Oread's height still watching over Lawrence, the altar of a State's great sacrifice.

For these younger ones dream only of their own day's joy, and battle with their own life problems. In the serenity and safety of a blood-bought land, defended by the strength of those who

> Came to rear a Wall of Men
> On Freedom's Southern line,

they gather in the rich harvests and pluck the ripe fruit whose planting and pruning care was given to the Empire Builders half a century ago.

THE END.

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